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Saipan Tribune

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OPINION METER

This week's poll:
Do you plan to attend any of the inauguration events scheduled next week?

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INSIDE

Tallest Building

Dubai is set to open today the world's tallest building amid tight security.

BUSINESS...Page 13

Equal Ties

Japan's prime minister said he will press for more equal ties with Washington this year.

ASIA...Page 15

Kiev Tour

Some cities are love at first sight. Others take you slowly. Kiev is like that.

LIFE & STYLE...Page 18

RECOUNT ORDERED for Rota ballots

> *[We] find CEC's cavalier attitude toward Rota voters to be repugnant to the democratic process.* —Chief Justice Miguel Demapan, and justices pro tem Timothy Bellas and Edward Manibusan

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

Citing violation of election laws, the CNMI Supreme Court has ordered the Commonwealth Election Commission to conduct a recount of all ballots cast in the Rota election. In its order for writ of mandamus, the Supreme Court directed the Superior Court to supervise the recount.

See RECOUNT on Page 4

NMC defends accuracy of its midterm report

By MONETH G. DEPOSA
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REPORTER

Northern Marianas College president Dr. Carmen Fernandez countered allegations of inaccuracies in NMC's accreditation report and justified the validity of its content, saying the report was put together using input from various sectors of the college.

Fernandez

While a consulting group was indeed contracted to help with the report, Fer-

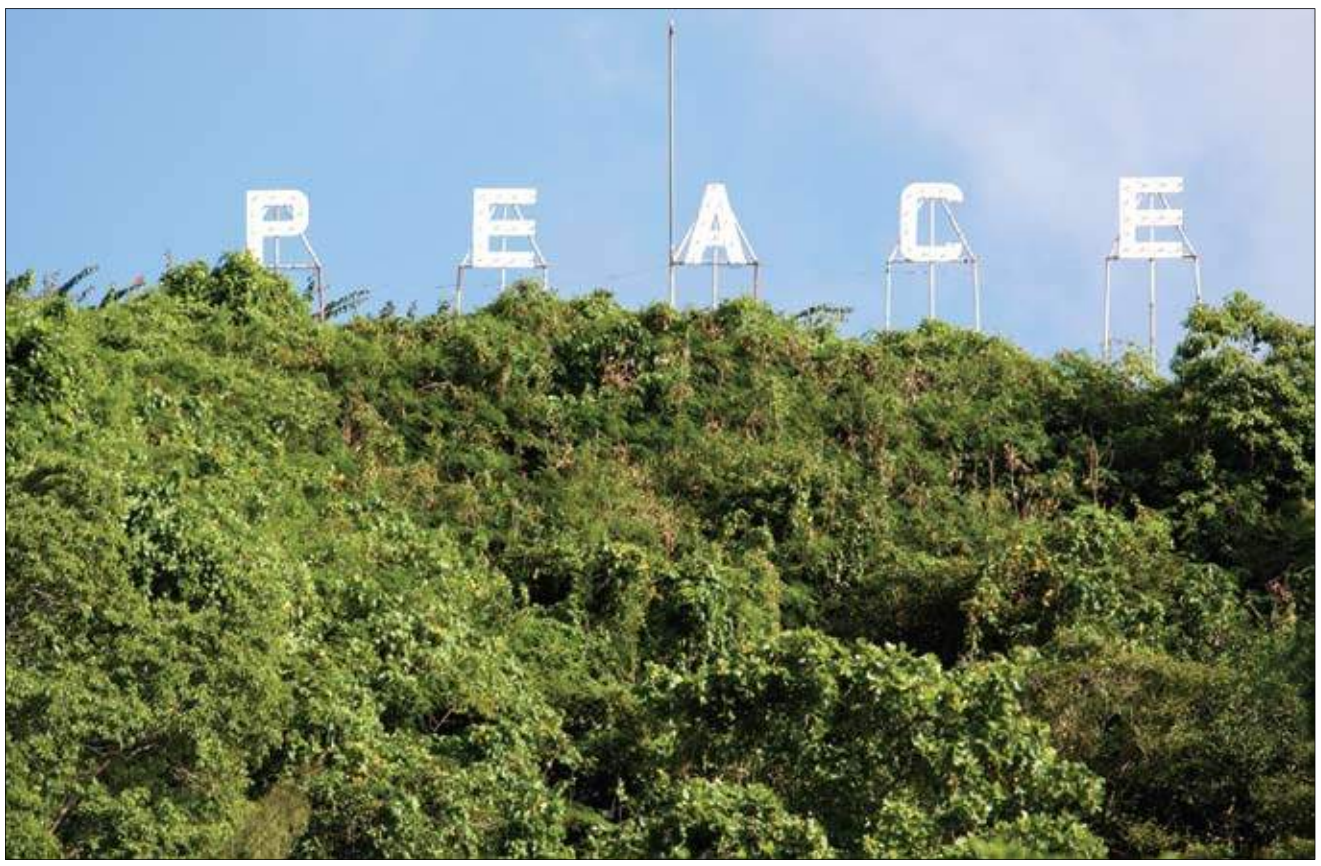
See NMC on Page 4

21 pct. plunge in NMI's 2009 vehicle sales

December's new vehicle sales increased by a whopping 73 percent, but the figures were not enough to lift the CNMI's overall vehicle sales for 2009, which saw a 21 percent decline from the previous year.

The 2009 sales marked the lowest annual CNMI vehicle sales in 10 years.

See story on Page 2



PEACE ON THE HILL HAIDEE V. EUGENIO

A giant sign of "peace," which is perched on a hill in Saipan's China Town, is the common message among CNMI residents as they join the rest of the world in welcoming 2010. As the CNMI and Guam are 15 hours ahead of Washington, D.C. during standard time, they were among the first U.S. territories to ring in the New Year.

CNMI Division of Immigration officially ends

By HAIDEE V. EUGENIO
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REPORTER

The CNMI's Division of Immigration under the Office of the Attorney General officially ceased operations effective Dec. 31, a little over a month after the

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Buckingham: Closure is 'difficult, trying period'

Hardship posed by detention favored 2 lawyers' release. PAGE 3
Rota casino commission asks MPLT for $1.8M loan. PAGE 5

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Local

21 percent plunge in CNMI's 2009 vehicle sales

Lowest annual sales in last 10 years

By HAIDEE V. EUGENIO
haidee_eugenio@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

December's new vehicle sales increased by a whopping 73 percent, but the figures were not enough to lift the CNMI's overall vehicle sales for 2009, which saw a 21 percent decline from the previous year.

The Commonwealth Auto Dealers Association reported yesterday that the industry sold only 469 new cars, trucks, vans and sport utility vehicle in 2009, a 21.18 percent plunge from the 595 sold in 2008.

The 2009 sales marked the lowest annual CNMI vehicle sales in 10 years.

Between 2000 and 2008, annual vehicle sales ranged anywhere between 595 and 1,681.

But the yearly vehicle sales in the CNMI reached over 3,000 in the years prior to the Asian economic crisis in the late '90s.

Matt Deets, president of CADA, said yesterday that the 21 percent decline is within the "20 to 25 percent" anticipated drop in sales in 2009.

For 2010, CADA projects "stable" sales unless there are drastic drop in tourist arrivals and drastic effects brought by federalization of CNMI immigration.

Deets, however, said that the December 2009 sales sharply increased by almost 73 percent.

CADA figures show that Joeten Motors, Microl Corp. and Triple J Motors sold 64 new vehicles in December 2009 compared to only 37 in December 2008.

"That's very good. The increase is a result of a combination of things—the clearance of 2009 models, the introduction of 2010 models, and Microl's recall program that gave customers cash and they used that cash as down payment for new cars," said Deets, who is also the general manage of Joeten Motors.

Microl Corp. posted a 167 percent increase in sales in December, from 12 to 32 units.

Joeten Motors also reported a 46 percent sales increase, from 13 in December 2008 to 19 in December 2009.

Triple "J" Motors sold 13 new vehicles in December, an 8 percent increase from the same month in 2008.

Annual sales

On an annual basis, only Triple "J" Motors posted a sales increase in 2009—from 120 in 2008 to 123 in 2009. Triple "J" Motors is the authorized dealer of new Hyundai, Mitsubushi, Isuzu, Suzuki and Mazda units.

Joeten Motors saw a 24 percent sales drop in 2009 to 146, from 192 the previous year. Joeten Motors is the authorized local distributor of Nissan, Ford, Honda and Kia units.

Microl Corp., which is the local distributor of new Toyotas and Chevrolets, posted a 29 percent sales drop—from 283 in 2008 to only 200 in 2009.

Top vehicles of choice

In 2009, Toyota Corolla was not only the top car of choice, but also the most saleable unit among all vehicle types, units or models.

There were 62 new Toyota Corollas sold from January to December 2009, followed by Toyota Yaris with 50 new units sold. The third car of choice last year was Mazda3 with 33 new units sold.

Among SUVs, Mitsubishi Outlander was the top choice with 28 sold units in 2009. Toyota RAV4 came in second with 26 units sold, and Nissan Rogue with 17 units sold last year.

Nissan Frontier sold the most number of new trucks with 19 units, followed by Toyota Tacoma with 17, and Mazda pickup with 12.

Among vans, GM Vans topped the sales chart with six units sold in 2009, followed by Toyota Sienna with five sold units and Mazda5 with four units sold.

Kilili hosts lunch for the *man'amko*

U.S. Rep. Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan made a surprise visit to the *mana'mko* yesterday, hosting a free lunch for the island's elderly and getting input from them on their needs at the Aging Center in Garapan.

Acting Aging Center director Rose Mondala said that she and her staff didn't tell the *man'amko* beforehand about Sablan's visit because they wanted to give the elderly a surprise treat.

"We want to surprise them with Kilili's visit," Mondala said.

For Sablan, though, yesterday's event was more than just about treating the *man'amko* to lunch. He said he also wanted to reach out to them.

"Times are difficult but we will help you [*man'amko*]," Sablan told the group. "We are now in 2010 and it will get better."

He advised the *man'amko* to share their concerns and needs with him so he could help them in any way. "I need your advice and concerns so that I can help you," said Sablan.

Although his job takes him away from Saipan, Sablan said it is his obligation to reach out to all CNMI citizens, including the elderly. "Government officials need to have a relationship with the *man'amko*," he said.

Aging Center's event coordinator Walter Manglona, left, and U.S. Rep. Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan pose for a picture during the luncheon held Monday, Dec. 4, 2010, at the Aging Center in Garapan.

JOVAN I. FRED

Sablan told the crowd that they may call him toll free at any time. The toll-free line, available from the Northern Marianas and throughout the United States, is 1-877-446-3465.

Sablan later told the *Saipan Tribune* that he is "very grateful to have this opportunity to be here and to lift up the spirit of the holiday,"

He later gave away CNMI quarters to the *man'amko*. ***(Jovan I. Fred)***

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PUBLIC NOTICE

in accordance with the "Open Government Act." The Public School System State Board of Education, through the Special Education State Advisory Panel (SESAP), and the Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC), is hereby serving notice to the general public that it will hold its meeting on Thursday, January 7, 2010. The ICC meeting is from 10:00am to 1:00pm at Napu Room and the SESAP meeting is from 5:30pm to 8:00pm at Annex room, Pacific Island Club. This meeting is open to the public. Interested individuals arc welcome to attend.

ICC AGENDA

I. Call to Order
a. Welcome & Introduction
b. Attendance & Quorum
II. State Performance Plan (SPP) and Annual Progress Reports (APR) - Review and finalize
Ill. Adjournment

SESAP AGENDA

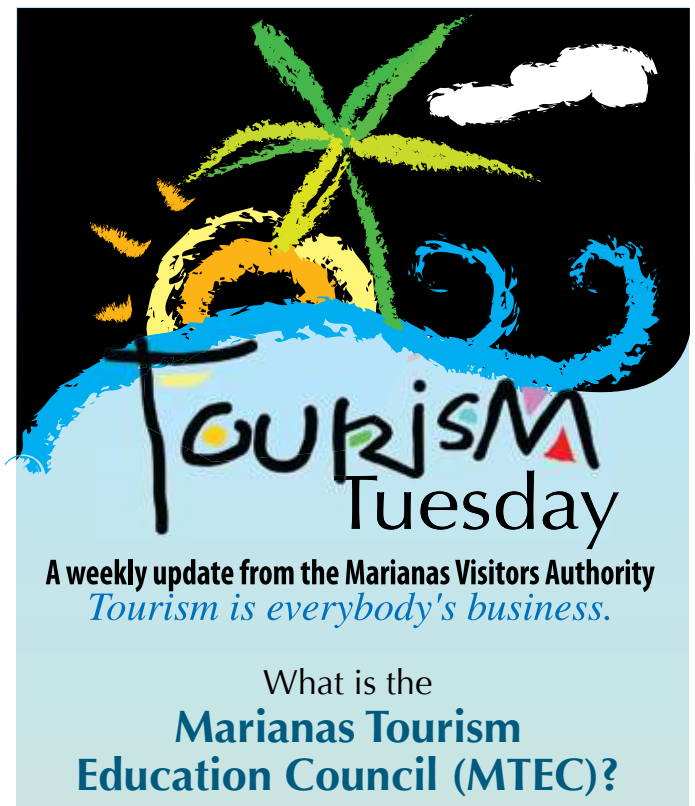
I. Call to Order
a. Welcome & Introduction
b. Attendance & Quorum
II. State Performance Plan (SPP) and Annual Progress Reports (APR) - Review and finalize
III. Adjournment

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), individuals who wish to attend this meeting, but require accessibility such as large print, sign language or interpreter, must call 237-3029. Several days notice is necessary to allow organizers ample time to make necessary arrangements.

/s/ Margaret Aldan
ICC, Chairperson

/s/ Frances Diaz
SESAP, Chairperson

/s/ Suzanne W. Lizama
Acting Coordinator
Special Education Program



A weekly update from the Marianas Visitors Authority
Tourism is everybody's business.

What is the
Marianas Tourism Education Council (MTEC)?

This Saturday morning, the **Marianas Tourism Education Council (MTEC)**, along with the **Marianas Visitors Authority**, will host its fundraising **Tank 2 Tank** swim-run event. **MTEC** is a nonprofit organization promoting community awareness on the importance of the visitor industry in the Northern Marianas. **MTEC**'s primary target group is school children, and the organization often works with school **MY WAVE** clubs. The funds from the **Tank 2 Tank**, as well as donations, have allowed **MTEC** to recently start a television ad campaign, reward schools for participating in island clean-ups, and help launch the **"Hafa Adai Tirow Way"** campaign promoting visitor hospitality in the community. **MTEC** membership is free and open to business organizations, public offices, and private individuals. If you are interested in helping with exciting community projects promoting tourism, or would like more information about **MTEC**, contact **MTEC** President Ed Cho of Saipan Grand Hotel at ed_cho@saipan-grandhotel.com or 1.670.234-6601.

HAFA ADAI & TIROW WAY

MARIANAS VISITORS AUTHORITY

This Tourism Tuesday space is provided by Saipan Tribune

Hardship posed by detention favored 2 lawyers' release

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Although there are serious questions that support his order for the release of lawyers Antonio Atalig and Reynaldo Yana, CNMI Supreme Court Associate Justice John A. Manglona said it is the unique hardship posed by the lawyers' detention that weighed in favor of the release.

Manglona, however, emphasized that his order should not be construed as a decision on any of the substative issues currently pending on appeal. He said the order also does not limit or dictate the argument that the Supreme Court may consider on appeal.

Atalig and Yana got out of the Department of Corrections on Dec. 24 after Manglona granted their request for a stay in enforcing Superior Court associate judge Kenneth Govendo's judgment, pending the lawyers' appeal.

In his order issued Dec. 23, Manglona noted that the two lawyers have been incarcerated for nearly one and one-half years already.

He said roughly half of that total detention has accrued since Govendo denied Atalig and Yana's motion to stay on April 24, 2009.

He said the ruling was based in part on the reasoning that Atalig and Yana could not claim to be suffering undue hardship when they could be released "merely by conforming to the orders of the court."

"While the question of whether Atalig and Yana still 'hold the keys' to their release is currently being contested on appeal, what appears uncontested is that incarceration has caused Atalig and Yana the many hardships inherent in serving a jail sentence," Manglona said.

Atalig and Yana have been in jail since March 2008 after Govendo found them in civil contempt for failing to return the $1.3 million in attorneys' fees that the two lawyers received from the Angel Malite estate.

Manglona said that Atalig and Yana's argument presumes that their present incarceration is not a valid exercise of the trial court's contempt powers and thus that their hardship is particularly severe, while the appellees' (Angel Malite estate's heirs) claimed hardship presumes that the trial court's award of $1.3 million to the estate will be upheld.

"These matters will ultimately be addressed by this court on appeal," he said.

Manglona said if the Supreme Court concludes that incarceration for contempt is indeed the appropriate action in this case, Atalig and Yana will have to go back to jail.

"However, because of the hardships imposed by the period of incarceration already served, and particularly mindful of the fact that this court will soon have the opportunity to determine whether additional incarceration is warranted, the overall balance of hardships sharply tips toward Atalig and Yana," he said.

Manglona said that, as the high court had previously explained, civil contempt sanctions are imposed either to coerce compliance with a court order or to compensate a complainant for losses sustained.

"Here, it appears to be conceded that Atalig and Yana were imprisoned for coercive and not compensatory purposes," Manglona said.

Whether self-induced inability to comply is a complete defense to coercive civil contempt is an open question in the Commonwealth and this makes if "fair ground for litigation," he said.

Second, Manglona said, there is a serious question concerning Atalig and Yana's argument that their continued incarceration constitutes imprisonment for criminal contempt and not civil contempt.

Under the law, imprisonment for criminal contempt is limited to six months.

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RESCHEDULED HAIDEE V. EUGENIO

An employee of Joeten Enterprises walks past a new Ford Ranger on display in front of the Joeten Susupe Shopping Center yesterday afternoon. Joeten Enterprises's 60th anniversary grand prize drawing in which the Ford Ranger is the grand prize, has been rescheduled from the original date of Jan. 2 to Jan. 16.

Man nabbed on New Year's Eve for sex abuse of a minor

Police arrested on New Year's Eve a 21-year-old man who allegedly engaged in a sexual relationship with a then 13-year-old girl in 2006.

Denmar E. Malabanan was arrested in Chalan Kanoa for sexual abuse of a child.

During yesterday's hearing, Superior Court associate judge Kenneth Govendo imposed a $5,000 cash bail for Malabanan's temporary liberty.

Associate Judge David Wiseman imposed a $25,000 cash bail in issuing the arrest warrant for Malabanan.

Preliminary hearing was set for Jan. 12. Arraignment was set for Jan. 19.

Detective Steven A. Castro stated in his report that during an interview with Detective Vincent Mareham last Dec. 21 the girl confessed she had sex with the defendant more than four times in 2006.

Castro said at the time, the defendant was 18 years old while the alleged victim was 13.

In the past few weeks, police arrested on Saipan and Tinian several men and a woman on charges of sexually abusing minors. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

Taiwanese fishing boat seized off NMI

U.S. Coast Guard arrests crew for illegal fishing

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (RNZI/PIR)—The U.S. Coast Guard has seized a Taiwanese fishing vessel for illegally fishing in the Northern Marianas Exclusive Economic Zone.

The Coast Guard cutter, *Washington*, intercepted the *Te Hung Fa* 27 kilometers inside the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone.

The crew of the fifty-six ton ship are accused of illegally fishing for sharks and tuna in the waters around the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The Pacific News Centre says the *Washington* escorted the Taiwanese ship into the Port of Saipan and the captain and crew of the *Te Hung Fa* were placed in custody.

They face charges of illegal fishing.

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IMMIGRATION

From Page 1

federal government took over local immigration on Nov. 28, *Saipan Tribune* learned yesterday.

Federalization of local immigration not only marked another chapter in the CNMI's 34-year relationship with the United States, but also leaves American Samoa as the only U.S. territory that controls its own borders.

CNMI Attorney General Edward T. Buckingham issued a memorandum on Dec. 31, officially notifying remaining division employees of the office closure.

"The Division of Immigration has finally come to a conclusion, December 31, 2009. The closure of the office is a difficult and trying period," said Buckingham in his one-page memorandum.

The attorney general thanked all Immigration employees for their "dedication and service" to the CNMI government and its people.

"I commend each of you on a job well done," Buckingham said.

Acting press secretary Teresa Kim, when asked for comment yesterday, said that funding for the Division of Immigration expired on Dec. 31, 2009.

As of yesterday, the Fitial administration has yet to release the specific number of CNMI immigration employees affected by the funding expiration for the office.

"We have worked to get as many people as possible placed into alternate jobs. Some of these efforts were continuing until the last day," Kim said.

She also noted ongoing meetings with CNMI immigration employees to discuss options within the government and options to retire, among other things.

Back in November, there were at least 34 remaining CNMI immigration officers with the division, but Gov. Benigno R. Fitial said at the time that his administration is doing its best to transfer eligible employees to other local agencies such as the Department of Corrections, the Division of Customs Service, or the Labor and Immigration Identification System.

At the stroke of midnight on Nov. 28, U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers from different parts of the United States took control of immigration checks at the Saipan and Rota airports, but the first international flight to be processed didn't arrive until past 1am that day.

Federalization of CNMI immigration came about as a result of Public Law 110-229 or the Consolidated Natural Resources Act signed by President Bush on May 8, 2008.

NMC

From Page 1

nandez said the document was substantially developed and written by the college's management team, in consultation with faculty, staff, and students.

She pointed out that other universities and colleges, including those in the Pacific region, regularly enlist the support of academic experts and consultants in preparing important reports and submissions.

Faculty Senate president Larry Lee had said during last week's Board of Regents meeting that several inaccurate information were incorporated in the midterm report and that the document was completed by a paid consultant and not by the college itself. The college submitted the report to the Western Association of Schools and Colleges in October.

In a statement issued yesterday, Fernandez said the consulting group sought input from programs and governance bodies from July through September 2009 to ensure participation of the entire college community. The consulting group then turned over its findings to the college so that NMC could take the lead in drafting and finalizing the midterm report, she said.

The preparation was spearheaded by Fernandez and NMC's accreditation liaison officer Galvin Deleon Guerrero, who is also the college's director of Institutional Effectiveness.

"Many employees sacrificed much of their weekends and holidays to ensure that the report was submitted on time. We are proud of the report because it encapsulates all the hard work and accomplishments placed forth by students, faculty, and staff in the past few months," Fernandez said.

She said the report was reviewed and officially adopted by the Board of Regents at its meeting on Oct. 15, 2009.

Not accepted yet

Deleon Guerrero told *Saipan Tribune* yesterday that NMC hired a consultant as part of standard practice of any university or college having issues to address about their accreditation.

"It's the common and standard practice and that's what we did. Our consultant worked very closely with us and they we're tasked primarily to meet with different programs, departments and governance bodies to get their inputs," he said.

The consultant was hired from July to September 2009.

Deleon Guerrero said that WASC has yet to accept NMC's midterm report and releasing data at this time would compromise the trust embedded in the commission's standards and policies.

WASC is set to meet on June 6 to 8 and is scheduled to accept the midterm report.

"We're not supposed to report anything about the visit until our midterm report is accepted. Releasing anything premature compromises the trust embedded in the commission's standards and policies," he said.

Deleon Guerrero described the report as one of the most comprehensive reports on NMC because it requires updates on the planning agenda from 2006.

He said this agenda is composed of over 200 action items that the college had identified and the commission had agreed to as needing to be addressed.

"The consultant provided us the input but we basically took over the work and wrote the report in September," he added.

RECOUNT

From Page 1

"The commission's failure to conduct a preliminary count on Rota deprived the candidates their right to observe the commission's review of ballots rejected by the voting machine—thereby subverting transparency—and effectively removed Rota voters from the arguably most important part of the election," according to the high court.

The opinion was penned by Chief Justice Miguel Demapan, and justices pro tem Timothy Bellas and Edward Manibusan.

Mandamus is a discretionary writ that compels a government official or agency to perform a legally required, ministerial public duty.

In a status conference yesterday, the Superior Court set the recounting of votes on Rota this Thursday at 1pm. The counting of votes will focus on the votes for the Rota mayor, Senate, and House of Representatives.

Background

Last Dec. 9, Superior Court presiding judge Robert C. Naraja upheld the Nov. 7 election results for the House of Representatives and mayoral races on Rota.

Naraja dismissed the election contest filed by Ross Hugh Songao Manglona and Rep. Victor Borja Hocog, the two losing independent candidates for the House and mayoral races respectively. The two sought a recount of votes.

Manglona sued his lone rival in the election, Teresita Apatang Santos (Independent), who was elected to a House seat.

Manglona also named defendants the two winners in the Senate seat for Rota—Jovita Maratita Taimanao and Juan Manglona Ayuyu (both Independents).

In a separate lawsuit, Hocog, an independent candidate for mayor of Rota, sued the winning candidate, Melchor Atalig Mendiola (Independent). The two lawsuits were then consolidated.

Following Naraja's dismissal of the case, Hocog and Manglona appealed to the CNMI Supreme Court.

Accordance with law

In their Dec. 31 opinion, the justices affirmed Naraja's finding of error on the part of the Election Commission and reversed the dismissal of the complaint.

The justices noted that it is axiomatic that public officials, particularly those charged with the administration of elections, must conduct their duties in accordance with the law.

"In this case, the Commonwealth Election Commission has failed to conduct itself in accordance with the law," the justices pointed out.

They said that due to the time-sensitive nature of election cases and given the strict time limitations the Legislature has placed on the courts in resolving election disputes, they find it prudent to issue the summary order.

The justices said they are, however, reserving the right to issue a supplemental decision with a more detailed analysis at a later time.

Improperly counted

Hocog and Manglona alleged that the Rota ballots were improperly counted because all of the ballots were not subjected to a preliminary count on Rota, as required by law.

Hocog and Manglona claimed that the absentee votes cast for mayor of Rota, senator, and representative were not placed on "local ballots," as required by the election statute.

The two also argued that a substantial number of votes for senator and representative from Rota were counted as undervotes by CEC when the intent of the voter could be discerned.

In the Dec. 4 hearing, Naraja said that, although CEC violated the law by not doing a preliminary count of all the Rota ballots on Rota—as required under the newly enacted Public Laws 16-38 and 16-43—neither Hocog and Manglona demonstrated "actual prejudice" and dismissed both complaints for "lack of evidence."

Naraja found no statutory remedy available for CEC's failure to comply with the law.

Democratic process

The justices agreed with Naraja that CEC violated Public Laws 16-38 and 16-43 when it failed to conduct a preliminary count on Rota of all the votes cast in the Rota election. The justices also agreed that the election contest law provides Hocog and Manglona with no adequate remedy for these violations.

"We disagree, however, with the trial court that these were mere technical violations," the justices stressed.

The justices determined that the violations not only run counter to the legislative purpose behind the enactment of Public Laws 16-38 and 16-43, but that they also effectively undermine the core principles of the democratic process.

The justices said they recognize that CEC is constrained by its budget, "but that could be said for all governmental entities," and that they find CEC's "cavalier attitude toward Rota voters to be repugnant to the democratic process."

The justices said they find it appropriate to exercise their supervisory jurisdiction and issue the writ of mandamus.

Citing the Commonwealth Election Law, as amended by Public Laws 16-38 and 16-43, the justices said votes cast for certain local positions "must be" "preliminarily counted, tabulated, and published in the senatorial district in which they were cast prior to shipment to [Saipan] for any final counting."

CEC had argued that the language of the election law does not encompass the "emergency" absentee ballots actually cast on Rota or the general absentee ballots cast from around the world for the Rota election but which were mailed to Saipan.

"We disagree. The statute presumes that all votes will eventually end up in the district for which they are cast," the justices said.

"Since 1 CMC §6524 (d) (2) is mandatory, and cannot be waived, the commission's failure to preliminarily count, tabulate, and publish the ballots cast for the Rota election [on] Rota prior to their shipment to Saipan was a violation of a clearly established legal duty and warrants mandamus," the justices said.

"We further note that we do not fear the floodgates opening in future elections. To the contrary, if the commission follows its statutorily defined duties, this court would not have to issue mandamus at all," they added.

MILLER WINNERS

Pacific Trading Co. capped off 2009 with the awarding of prizes for its Miller Lite's 12 Days of Christmas giveaway promo. With every purchase of a six-pack of Miller beer, customers received an entry form. Here, PTC's Mike Babauta, right, presents Francisco Agulto with a Playstation 3 that he won.
CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Pacific Trading Co.'s Mike Babauta, right, presents Julie Camacho with a computer netbook that she won in Miller Lite's 12 Days of Christmas giveaway promo.
CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Pacific Trading Co.'s Mike Babauta, right, presents Vanessa Aldan, with a 32" flat screen TV as the grand prize winner in Miller Lite's 12 Days of Christmas giveaway promo. Other winners and their prizes include Edward Flores (iPod Shuffle), Chang Sik Choe (Laulau Bay golf package), Manolito Santiago (PIC brunch with waterpark), and G-Sword (dinner package for 20 persons).
CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Rota casino commission asks MPLT for $1.8M loan

By HAIDEE V. EUGENIO
haidee_eugenio@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Rota Casino Gaming Commission is asking for a $1.8 million loan from the Marianas Public Lands Trust to pay for a $228,000 Fiscal Year 2009 deficit, and for working capital to be secured by future revenue from the casino industry.

Commission chair Diego M. Songao, in a letter to MPLT vice chair Alvaro Santos, said a pending measure, House Bill 16-271, earmarks future revenues from MPLT that will be used for the commission's operation.

But H.B. 16-271 has yet to be enacted and could only be used for FY 2011 or 2012.

"We cannot wait any longer. At present, there are investors at our doorstep; some have picked up applications and one has submitted an application to open a casino. However, the Commission has no funds or working capital to move forward with its obligation to set up the administrative office," Songao told Santos.

The commission chair also said the central government has very limited resources and at present, cannot accommodate the commission's budgetary needs.

Vianney Hocog, MPLT trustee, said yesterday that MPLT has not approved the commission's loan request yet. He said MPLT will have its next board meeting tentatively set for Jan. 15.

"In my opinion, I hope the other MPLT trustees will approve the Rota Casino Commission loan because it's a good investment," he told *Saipan Tribune* in a phone interview.

There are at least four groups of investors interested in operating casinos on Rota.

They include the Rota Treasure Island Corp. which plans to operate a $25 million casino at the existing Rota Hotel in Sunton; Rota Resort & Country Club owner Hee Kyun Cho, who also plans to operate a $10 million casino in his hotel property, as well as build a $1 million water bottling facility; Chinese investors American Pacific; and the China-based Renfeng Investment.

Of the four investors, only Rota Treasure Island Corp. has so far submitted an application with the Rota Casino and Gaming Commission for a casino license.

'Grace period'

Songao, in his letter to Santos, said because of the infancy of the casino industry on Rota, the commission wants a grace period of six months to pay the interest and repayment of the principal starting in FY 2013.

"In addition, we ask that the lowest interest rate be applied to our loan based on what is allowable in MPLT's investment portfolio," Songao told Santos.

Songao also said that MPLT's approval to the loan request "will greatly assist" the commission "and provide the people of Rota with more opportunities once casinos are operating."

"This will also provide the entire CNMI with an added economic stimulus that is badly needed at this time," Songao added.

Casino operation is allowed only on Tinian and Rota, not on Saipan.

So far, however, only the Tinian Dynasty Hotel & Casino is operating. Three other groups of investors are planning to operate casinos on Tinian: Neo Gold Wings Paradise, Bridge Investment Group, and Marianas Resort Development Corp.

From 1991 to 2003, Rota tried four times without success to allow casino operation through public initiative.

However, in November 2007, Rota voters overwhelmingly voted in favor of the public initiative to allow casino gaming. About 85 percent of the votes cast voted in favor of the initiative, now known as the Rota Casino Act of 2007.

Saipan voters rejected casino operations on the island.

Projected revenues and spending

Based on the Rota Casino Gaming Commission's data, it projects total revenue of $752,850 in FY 2010, which started on Oct. 1, 2009 and ends on Sept. 30, 2010.

However, FY 2010 projected total expenditure is over $1.83 million, including the FY 2009 deficit of $228,000.

A debt service of $67,500 for the requested $1.8 million MPLT loan is also projected.

All these result in a "negative" fund balance of over $1.12 million for FY 2010.

For FY 2011, the commission projects revenue of over $2.45 million and total expenditure of over $1.99 million, plus $135,000 in debt service to MPLT, for a fund balance of "negative" $797,860.

The commission expects to post positive fund balance in FY 2012, amounting to $193,929.

For FY 2012, it projects revenue of over $3.26 million and expenditure of over $2.14 million, plus $135,000 in debt service.

For FY 2013, the commission projects earnings of almost $3.6 million and spending of over $2.2 million, plus debt service of $135,000 in principal amount and $180,000 in interest, for a fund balance of over $1.27 million.

The MPLT loan interest is projected at 7.5 percent.

The commission also expects a fund balance of over $5 million by FY 2014. This is projected to result from revenue of over $6.7 million, expenditures of over $2.58 million, and debt service of $135,000 in principal amount and $180,000 in interest.

On Dec. 23 last year, the Superior Court issued an order preventing outgoing Tinian Mayor Jose P. San Nicolas and outgoing Tinian Sen. Joseph M. Mendiola from entering into any loans or investments with the Marianas Public Land Trust on behalf of the Tinian municipality.

Dela Cruz and the winners in the Nov. 7 election for the positions in the Senate and House filed the lawsuit to stop the incumbents from pursuing a $1 million loan from MPLT. The plaintiffs said the loan is based on an unconstitutional law.

Fund says it has 6.5K plan members

By MONETH G. DEPOSA
moneth_deposa@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The NMI Retirement Fund has disclosed that it has over 6,500 active and retired members to date, with more than half still active and contributing to the retirement plan.

Fund administrator Mark Aguon conveyed this to the Commonwealth Retirement Association in his response to the group's inquiry about updated membership statistics.

In a letter to CRA chair Juan Sablan, Aguon said that of the 6,584 total Fund membership, 3,651 are active employees, while the rest, totaling 2,933, are receiving retirement benefits and claims under the plan.

Of those getting pension benefits, 2,144 are listed as retirees while 517 are surviving spouses.

Fund records also show a total of 182 surviving children beneficiaries and 90 disability pension recipients.

Sablan said yesterday the actual numbers are essential to the planning of the CRA because retirees have had for many years no accurate data on Fund members.

"We're happy that this board took time to provide us this important record because our retirees have been misguided by inaccurate numbers. Now that we have the actual figures, we can plan and work better for our retirees," he told *Saipan Tribune*.

The CRA was formed late last year. Sablan said the group will launch a membership drive to strengthen the association. It targets to recruit the more than 2,000 retirees on the islands.

Besides the statistics, Aguon also updated the association on the progress of the Fund's Web site, which continues to be under construction.

As of yesterday, Sablan said the group is still awaiting the Fund's response to its inquiry on the status of the over $231 million court judgment against the administration.

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
Costal Resources Management
P.O. Box 10007, 2nd Floor, Morgen Building
San Jose, Saipan, MP 96950

COASTAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

PUBLIC NOTICE

To: ALL BOAT OPERATORS

The Coastal Resources Management Office requests that boat operators who refuel their vessels within coastal waters ensure that the fuel containers used have CRM approved safety nozzles to prevent any fuel discharge, and to have CRM approved absorbent pads in place onsite in case of any spillage. CRMO will be closely monitoring vessel operators who refuel in-water to ensure compliance with this notice.

The use of safety nozzles and absorbent pads will help minimize any discharge of fuel that might impact CNMI coastal waters and marine life.

Please contact 664-8300 if you have any questions about this notice.

/s/ John B. Joyner, Ph.D.
CRMO Director

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS

The Department of the Navy (DoN) and the Joint Guam Program Office (JGPO) will host public hearings on the islands of Guam, Tinian, and Saipan to receive oral and written comments on the Guam and Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) military relocation Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Overseas Environmental Impact Statement (EIS/OEIS). The Draft EIS/OEIS analyzes the potential environmental impacts associated with relocating Marines from Okinawa, Japan to Guam, constructing visiting Aircraft Carrier berthing facilities, and establishing a U.S. Army Air and Missile Defense Task Force on Guam. The Draft EIS/OEIS also examines off base mission critical, mission support, and community support infrastructure improvements needed to ensure that Joint Region Marianas can provide expanded direct support of the DoD strategic mission and operational readiness in the Western Pacific Region. The public hearings will be conducted in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act and the National Historic Preservation Act.

The public is encouraged to attend the public hearings, which will be held at the following dates, times, and locations:

Thursday January 7, 2010- Southern High School, Santa Rita, Guam, 5:00 pm-7:00 pm (Open House) 7:00 pm- 9:00 pm (Formal Hearing)

Saturday January 9, 2010- Field House, University of Guam, Mangilao, Guam, 1:00 pm-3:00 pm (Open House) 3:00 pm-5:00 pm (Formal Hearing)

Monday January 11, 2010- Yigo Gymnasium, Yigo, Guam, 5:00 pm-7:00 pm (Open House) 7:00 pm-9:00 pm (Formal Hearing)

Tuesday January 12, 2010- Okkodo High School, Dededo, Guam, 5:00 pm-7:00 pm (Open House) 7:00 pm- 9:00 pm (Formal Hearing)

Thursday January 14, 2010- Tinian Elementary School, San Jose, Tinian 5:00 pm-7:00 pm (Open House) 7:00 pm- 9:00 pm (Formal Hearing)

Friday January 15, 2010- Multi Purpose Center, Susupe, Saipan 5:00 pm-7:00 pm (Open House) 7:00 pm- 9:00 pm (Formal Hearing)

An open house will take place during the first two hours of each hearing, followed by a two-hour formal public hearing. Informational posters will be displayed and subject matter experts will be available during the open house to discuss the findings of the Draft EIS/OEIS and to answer questions from the public. The formal portion of the hearing will include a presentation followed by a request for comments on the Draft EIS/OEIS. Chamorro translators will be available at all hearings, and Carolinian translators will be available at the Tinian and Saipan hearings.

Oral and/or written comments may be submitted at the public hearings. Oral comments will be limited to three minutes. After three minutes, speakers will be allowed to continue off-stage with a typist. Interested agencies, individuals, and groups unable to attend the public hearings are encouraged to provide written comments postmarked no later than February 17, 2010.

Mail comments to: JGPO c/o NAVFAC Pacific
258 Makalapa Drive, Suite 100
Pearl Harbor, Hawaii 96860-3134
Attention: GPMO

A web-based comment form can also be submitted at www.guambuildupeis.us.

The Draft EIS/OEIS is available for review at www.guambuildupeis.us and at the following libraries: University of Guam Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Library, Government Documents Tan Siu Lin Building, UOG Station, Mangilao, GU 96923; Nieves M. Flores Memorial Library, 254 Martyr Street, Hagåtña, GU 96910; Joeten-Kiyu Public Library, P.O. Box 501092, Saipan, MP 96950; Northern Marianas College Olympio T. Borja Memorial Library, P.O. Box 501250, Saipan, MP 96950; and the Tinian Public Library, P.O. Box 520704, Tinian, MP 96952. In addition, a reading room with copies of the Draft EIS/OEIS for the public to review has been established at Agana Shopping Center. This facility will be open during normal shopping center hours starting from November 21, 2009 to February 17, 2010 so that members of the public can access and review the Draft EIS/OEIS.

Federal agencies, government of Guam agencies, government of CNMI agencies, the public, and other interested parties are encouraged to provide oral and/or written comments for consideration in the Final EIS/OEIS. JGPO will consider all comments received as they develop the Final EIS/OEIS.

Supreme Court affirms first-degree murder conviction

The Supreme Court has affirmed the murder conviction of a man who was found guilty by a jury of killing a cashier during a robbery at a poker arcade in 2002.

In a ruling issued Thursday last week, the high court upheld the jury's verdict in *Commonwealth v. Pua*, finding Francisco Aguon Pua guilty of first-degree felony murder.

Pua was convicted of killing Mostofa Faruk Parves on May 22, 2002, as he worked as a cashier at Candi's Poker. At trial, Pua was acquitted of robbery at the crime scene, but found guilty of first degree murder. On appeal, the Supreme Court rejected three main arguments raised by Pua's attorney to try and have the jury's guilty verdict reversed.

Pua had argued that a pouch found in a garbage bin by an investigating police officer during the investigation was improperly entered into evidence. The Supreme Court held that the pouch was admissible at trial under the "plain view" exception to Article 1, Section 3 of the CNMI Constitution. This exception permits an officer to seize an item if the officer lawfully views the object, the incriminating character of the item is immediately apparent, and the officer has a lawful right to access the object. The high court said this exception applied because the officer found the pouch while executing a valid search warrant that included the trash bin, and the pouch had a red stain that an officer could reasonably believe was blood and therefore evidence of a crime.

At trial, Pua's attorney filed a motion for acquittal, arguing that there was not enough evidence to uphold a robbery conviction, and that both the robbery charge and the murder charge that resulted from the victim's death during the alleged robbery should be dismissed by the judge. Pua argued that because the jury ultimately found him not guilty of robbery, this was proof that the trial court improperly denied his motion.

The Supreme Court disagreed, holding that the trial court did not err in denying Pua's motion to acquit because even though the jury ultimately acquitted Pua of robbery, there was enough evidence for the matter to be submitted to the jury. The court specifically referenced evidence admitted at trial including surveillance tapes establishing that Pua was walking near the scene of the crime with what appeared to be a knife, that DNA samples taken from the seized pouch matched Parves' DNA profile, and that Parves' body was found near the cashier's booth with the cash register open and empty. Given this evidence, a jury could have found that a robbery took place, the high court said. The motion for acquittal was therefore properly denied.

Finally, Pua's attorney filed a motion to set aside the jury's verdict, arguing that Pua's murder conviction must be reversed because he was not found guilty of robbery. Under the so-called "felony murder rule," a defendant can be convicted of first degree murder if someone is murdered during the commission of a felony; in this case, robbery or attempted robbery. The Supreme Court held that the trial court properly denied Pua's motion—and thus that the jury verdict should stand—because the murder conviction and robbery acquittal were not inconsistent. The Supreme Court said the jury was instructed that first degree murder could occur during either a robbery or an attempted robbery, and reasoned that because Pua was acquitted of robbery, the jury must have necessarily based its first degree murder conviction on the fact that they believed Pua attempted to rob Parves. The court further concluded that even though Pua was not charged or convicted of attempted robbery, a conviction on the underlying felony was not necessary in order to secure a first degree felony murder conviction.

Justice Pro Tem Jesus C. Borja concurred with the majority's opinion. However, he wrote separately to express his belief that because the murder conviction could be based on attempted robbery, it was irrelevant whether there was sufficient evidence to uphold a robbery conviction. Justice Pro Tem Borja concurred with the reasoning and conclusion in the remainder of the opinion. ***(PR)***

Good turnout, over $2K sales in Arts Council exhibit

By MONETH G. DEPOSA
moneth_deposa@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Commonwealth Council for Arts and Culture had a satisfying turnout in the recently concluded Island Artists and Christmas Craft Exhibit on Capitol Hill, with over $2,000 sales and about a hundred spectators during the monthlong event.

Parker Yobei, the council's Arts in Education coordinator, said yesterday the most saleable items included Chamorro artifacts such as "lusuk" and "matali." Various postcards and little Christmas ornaments were also among the top-selling products.

Among the crowd favorites were the visual arts entered by artists Robert Hunter, Xiao Ping, and Keli Tenorio as well as the photograph exhibits entered by Jack Hardy and Mark Robertson. The entries of traditional artists Manuel Bermudes, Flowerpot Salas, Gordon Salas, Kate Winslet, and Priscilla Pangelinan also wowed visitors.

The council hosts the holiday exhibit every year. In December 2009, over a hundred crafts and visual arts were showcased at the council's gallery on Capital Hill. The monthlong event began on Dec. 7 and ran through Dec. 31.

Yobei said that majority of customers bought items as gifts for off-island friends and relatives. *Saipan Tribune* learned that Yobei alone sold about $300 worth of visual arts and souvenir items. All proceeds went to the participating artists.

The exhibit sales and attendance turnout would even be higher if tourists are able to easily access the area, he said.

For the past several years, the council had noted a low turnout of visitors due to the gallery's distance from the main district.

In an earlier interview with Arts Council acting executive director Vince Rabauliman, he had said the council is still reviewing plans to relocate the gallery to Garapan, where most tourists congregate. Rabaulimas said that due to the funding shortage, the council was unable to move the exhibit to another location last year.

"We want to move it around… but we're hampered by the funding shortage. We don't have enough money to pay for the rent. That's why we're seeking the community help by helping us with the space for our exhibits," he added.

Saipan Tribune learned that no tourists and school children visited this year's showcase.

However, Yobei said the council managed to reach out to students with weeklong special arts sessions at a number of public schools such as Hopwood Junior High School, Dandan Elementary School, and San Antonio Elementary School.

This year, Yobei is scheduled to continue the outreach program at Koblerville Elementary School and San Vicente Elementary School.

"We're doing the sessions as an after-school program and we hope to cover more schools this year to educate our students and promote our arts and culture," Yobei added.

Every year, the arts council sponsors three major exhibits: the women's exhibit in March, Pacifica arts and cultural exhibit in September, and Island Artist and Christmas Craft Exhibit in December.

EMO warns of dangerous rip currents

The CNMI Emergency Management Office issued a high surf advisory yesterday, saying a large northwest swell is expected to create hazardous surf conditions along north and west exposures through Tuesday.

Based on information received from the National Weather Service in Tiyan, Guam, a hazardous surf of 9 to 12 feet is expected on north facing reefs and 8 to 10 feet on west facing reefs. The hazardous surf was expected to peak last night and slowly subside today.

"The high surf advisory remains in effect until 3pm today along north facing and west facing reefs," EMO said.

Until then, EMO is strongly advising the public to avoid venturing near exposed reefs and beaches, especially those along north and west facing reefs, as rip currents are life threatening. ***(EMO)***

CONGRATULATIONS!

Jocelyn R. Asistores, center, is recognized as McDonald's (Chalan Pale Arnold Road) 2009 Manager of the Year. She was presented the award during the 16th Annual McDonald's Christmas Party held at the Fiesta Resort and Spa Saipan's Hibiscus Hall on Dec. 24, 2009. Presenting her the award are Marcia E. Ayuyu, store general manager, and Joe C. Ayuyu, president/owner of McDonald's

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Crisanta D. Daliva, center, is named McDonald's (Garapan Beach Rd.) 2009 Manager of the Year. She was presented the award during the 16th Annual McDonald's Christmas Party at the Fiesta Resort and Spa Saipan's Hibiscus Hall on Dec. 24, 2009. Others in photo are Joe C. Ayuyu, president/owner of McDonald's, and Marcia E. Ayuyu, store general manager.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Gil Gapor, center, is recognized as McDonald's (Chalan Pale Arnold Road) Employee of the Year during the 16th Annual McDonald's Christmas Party at the Fiesta Resort and Spa Saipan's Hibiscus Hall on Dec. 24, 2009. He is shown here receiving the award from Marcia E. Ayuyu, store general manager, and Joe C. Ayuyu, president/owner of McDonald's.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

EMPLOYEE OF THE QUARTERS FOR 2009

McDonald's Chalan Pale Arnold Rd.
Edmar Manzanilla - 1st Quarter
Miles Ianne Pamintuan - 2nd Quarter
Larigie Achas - 3rd Quarter
Erica Taitano and Gil Gapor - 4th Quarter

McDonald's Garapan
Aubrey Antonio - 1st Quarter
Marcelo Gutierrez Jr. - 2nd Quarter
Michael Terrence Igros - 3rd Quarter
Shiela Kate Ayuyu - 4th Quarter

Shiela Kate Ayuyu is named McDonald's (Garapan Beach Rd.) Employee of the Year during the 16th Annual McDonald's Christmas Party at the Fiesta Resort and Spa Saipan's Hibiscus Hall on Dec. 24, 2009. Ayuyu is shown here receiving her award from Marcia E. Ayuyu, store general manager, and Joe C. Ayuyu, president/owner of McDonald's.

High court issues decision in Tano-DPW suit

The CNMI Supreme Court, in a unanimous decision issued Thursday last week, affirmed in part, reversed in part, and remanded to the Superior Court the lawsuit between Tano Group Inc. and the Department of Public Works relating to the $4.8 million contract to build Saipan Southern High School.

Tano was supposed to complete the school's construction by the start of the 2001 school year, but instead it was completed a year late. The parties blamed each other for delays and other problems that occurred during the course of construction. DPW did not complain about the quality of the work.

In November 2002, Tano sought the final payment due under the contract, amounting to $367,919.85, and other sums for standby costs and necessary work that exceeded the scope of the contract. DPW also failed to release Tano's construction bonds, which prevented it from getting similar work. The parties held several meetings over the next two years in an attempt to resolve their differences, to no avail.

In early 2005 both parties asked the Director of Procurement to hear the dispute and render a decision. The director refused involvement and Tano filed a lawsuit in Superior Court. In response, DPW argued that the court should not hear the case because the director had not rendered a decision. The Superior Court agreed and ordered that the director to hear Tano's grievances. In June 2005 the director issued a decision, and Tano filed suit seeking review of the decision by the trial court. The trial court heard the entire case and both parties appealed to the Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court found that the Superior Court properly exercised jurisdiction over the dispute. The Supreme Court also upheld the trial court's decision regarding which damages to award and which damages not to award. The Supreme Court, however, found that the trial court applied the wrong interest rate to Tano's damages, and that it had improperly placed the burden of proof on Tano regarding the reasonableness of its mitigation efforts.

The full opinion of this complex construction litigation case is *Tano Group, Inc. v. Department of Public Works, et al.* and can be found at the CNMI Judiciary's Web site under "News Archives" on the Home page. ***(PR)***

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Kagman Elementary School events

This is to inform the parents and guardians, of Kagman Elementary School about important events that will happen this week. The PTA meeting will be held on Wednesday, Jan. 6, 2010, at 6:30pm in the school cafeteria. All parents and guardians are highly encouraged to attend this meeting. A very important agenda will include the accreditation visit for the school.

The second quarter mid-progress report distribution will be on Friday, Jan. 8, 2010 at 1:30-4:30pm in your children's respective classroom. All parents and guardians are highly encouraged to come in and pick up your child's 2nd quarter mid-progress report. ***(PR)***

OES PTSA meeting

The PTSA officers of Oleai Elementary School would like to inform the parents and guardians of Oleai Elementary Elementary School that there will be a PTSA meeting on Tuesday, Jan. 12, 2010, 6:15pm in the school cafeteria. Everyone is encouraged to attend.

MHS open house on Jan. 6

Marianas High School will be hosting its second open house on Jan. 6, 2010 from 4pm to 6pm. Students will be released at 1pm on this day to allow the school time to prepare for the event. During the open house, progress reports will be distributed for second quarter grades. The school is inviting all parents/legal guardians to visit their student's classrooms, meet the teachers, and pick up their student's progress reports. ***(PR)***

Multi-family garage sale on Jan. 9

A multifamily garage sale will be held this Saturday, Jan. 9, from 8:30am to 1pm, at the Upper Navy Hill. Items include books, bookcases, CDs, toys, clothing, and other household items. Those interested are asked to look for the signs. ***(PR)***

MMAC organizing committee meeting set

The Marianas March Against Cancer 2010 Organizing Committee will be having a committee meeting today, Jan. 5, at 5:30pm, at the Hyatt Regency Saipan's Chamolinan Room. As the committee begins to prepare for the 2010 MMAC event, the committee would like to extend their sincere appreciation to the teams, community, and sponsors for the continued support for the fight against cancer. If you are interested in volunteering, contact 2010 chairwoman Janine Nogis at janine.nogis@gmail.com. For more information, contact 483-3874. ***(PR)***

Free science lecture on Friday

Physics professor John N. Hait will be conducting a free science lecture titled "Simple wave and hydropower on a budget: Alternative energy for fun and profit." This lecture is timely, has practical applications for local use, and will show ways of how to make the islands a showcase of Earth-compatible energy generation.

The free lecture will be held Friday, Jan. 8, 2010, at 6pm, at the American Memorial Park auditorium. For more info go to www.EinsteinCode.info. Also, learn science the easy way with online poetry. ***(PR)***

SCC sets installation dinner

The 2010 Saipan Chamber of Commerce installation dinner will be held poolside at the Hyatt Regency Saipan on Saturday, Jan. 9, 2010, at 6pm. The evening's keynote speaker will be U.S. Rep. Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (D-MP).

The Chamber will also announce the recipient of its Businessperson of the Year award at the installation dinner. This year's nominees are: James Arenovski, Vicente "Ben" Babauta, and Phillip Mendiola-Long.

The evening will include silent auction, the proceeds of which will benefit the Chamber's Education Scholarship Fund and other educational endeavors. Entrance to the installation dinner is $50 per person and reservations must be made in advance by calling the Chamber office at 233-7150.

Can you identify

THE NMI Council for the Humanities in collaboration with the *Saipan Tribune* is running a series of photographs in this section every Tuesday and is inviting the public to identify the persons or places featured in this section.

If you can identify the persons or places in the picture, please contact the NMI Council for the Humanities by telephone (235-4785), via email (photo@nmihumanities.org) or by visiting the Council's office located in Springs Plaza, Gualo Rai. These images are from the Council's Historic Photograph Database which is currently being developed to help document the history and cultures of the CNMI.

The person featured in last week's photo has been identified as Maria Arriola Deleon Guerrero Tomokane. She was identified by Vicky Concepcion.

GROUP HEALTH & LIFE INSURANCE TRUST FUND
NMI RETIREMENT
P.O. Box 501247 C.K., Saipan, MP 96950
Phone: (670) 664-8026 / Fax: (670) 664-8070
Website: www.nmiretirement.com
Email: administrator01@nmiretirement.com

EMERGENCY

Request for Proposals NO. GH10-001

GROUP LIFE INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES AND RETIREES

Addendum No. 1 (December 31, 2009)

This addendum is issued to make the following changes on the proposal submission date and time:

- The Proposal Submission date is changed from 4:00 p.m. December 31, 2009 to **4:00 p.m., January 11, 2010.**

Mark A. Aguon, Administrator
Northern Mariana Islands Retirement Fund
P.O. Box 501247 CK
Saipan, MP 96950-1247
Fax: 670/664-8080
E-mail: administrator01@nmiretirement.com

Public Notice To Our Valued Customers:

The Management's decision to move the date of our Raffle Drawing from January 2nd to January 16th is based on providing the most fair outcome to our Grand Prize Raffle Drawing. Because not all the raffle tickets were received from all our locations on Saipan and Rota to our central location in Susupe on January 2nd the decision was made to postpone the drawing of the raffle.

We also would like to clarify that Joeten will not be distributing or accepting raffle tickets for our 60th Anniversary Grand Prize in order to remain fair to all the participants who have abided by the deadline rules. We wholeheartedly apologize for this inconvenience.

We appreciate your business

Joeten Enterprises, Inc.

Fatality in Tinian moped crash was passenger

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The teenage girl who died in a moped crash on Tinian over the weekend was the passenger of the scooter, according to the Department of Public Safety yesterday.

DPS spokesman Eric David said the fatality, a 16-year-old girl, was the rear passenger of the scooter driven by a 16-year-old boy.

The unconfirmed initial information indicated that there were two scooters involved.

David said the victims, both Chamorros and residents of San Jose, Tinian, were thrown from the scooter's seat.

David said the girl had lacerations on the back of her head and superficial abrasions on the hip, knees, and both shoulder blades.

The injured boy had abrasions on the right shoulder. He was treated and later released.

David said that, on Saturday at 4:25pm, a Tinian DPS dispatcher received a call about a moped accident along the main highway of Broadway Street in San Jose. Police officers and medics responded to the scene.

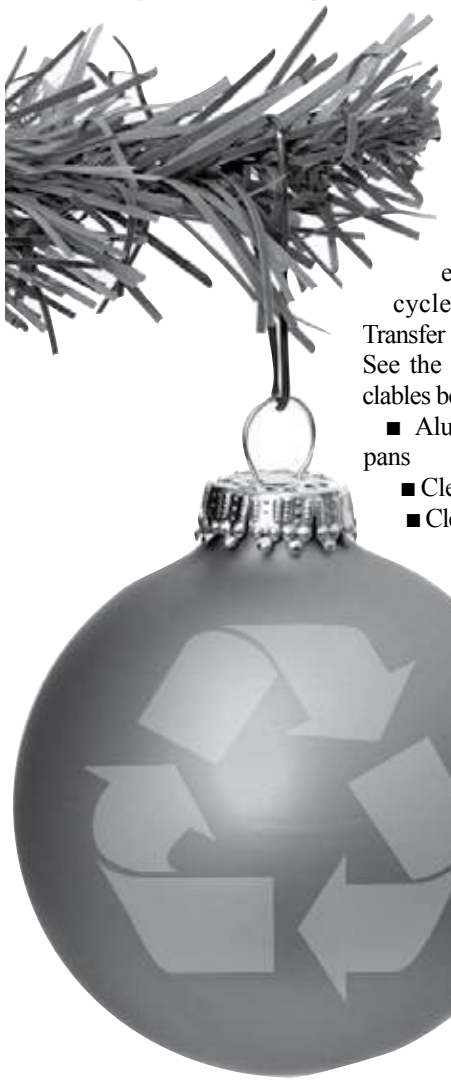
A preliminary report showed that the victims were on a scooter and heading west by the old GIO Building at a speed of 30-45 miles per hour.

As the victims were approaching the main intersection of Broadway Street to make a left turn, the boy lost control of the scooter.

"The case is under investigation," David said.

The incident is the first vehicular fatality in the CNMI for 2010. In 2009, six people were killed in vehicular crash incidents in the Commonwealth. Last year's deadly crashes all occurred on Saipan.

Recycling Christmas



As a New Year begins, CNMI residents may find that now is a good time to start building a habit of recycling. A large portion of waste generated during the Holiday Season could easily be sorted and recycled at the Lower Base Transfer Station (tel: 322-2745). See the list of permitted recyclables below:

- Aluminum cans, foil, & pans
- Clean glass bottles & jars
- Clean plastic bottles & jars
- Used toner cartridges
- Paper
- Cardboard
- Tires
- Books & magazines
- Electronics
- Scrap metals
- White goods
- Soft metals
- Household hazardous waste

Other tips for reducing holiday waste

Thousands of paper and plastic shopping bags end up in landfills every year. Reduce the number of bags thrown out by bringing reusable cloth bags for holiday gift shopping. Tell store clerks you don't need a bag for small or oversized purchases.

Turn off or unplug holiday lights during the day. Doing so will not only save energy, but will also help your lights last longer.

Look for ways to recycle your tree instead of sending it to a landfill. Check with your community solid waste department and find out if they collect and mulch trees. Your town might be able to use chippings from mulched trees for hiking trails and beachfront erosion barriers.

Tips to consider for the NEXT holiday season:

Wrap gifts in recycled or reused wrapping paper or funny papers. Also remember to save or recycle used wrapping paper. Give gifts that don't require much packaging, such as concert tickets or gift certificates.

Send recycled-content greeting cards to reduce the amount of virgin paper used during the holidays. Remember to recycle any paper cards you receive. You can also try sending electronic greeting cards to reduce paper waste.

To help prevent waste from cutting down and disposing of live trees, you can buy a potted tree and plant it after the holidays.

Have a create-your-own-decorations party! Invite family and friends to create and use holiday decorations such as ornaments made from old greeting cards or cookie dough, garlands made from strung popcorn or cranberries, wreaths made from artificial greens and flowers, and potpourri made from kitchen spices such as cinnamon and cloves.

Consider the durability of a product before you buy it as a gift. Cheaper, less durable items often wear out quickly, creating waste and costing you money.

When buying gifts, check product labels to determine an item's recyclability and whether it is made from recycled materials. Buying recycled encourages manufacturers to make more recycled-content products available.

Source: Lisa Huynh Eller/CNMI Division of Environmental Quality/ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations go out to Joserin Mendiola after receiving a $5,000 scholarship award from NMC Foundation. Joining Mendiola in the photos are Northern Marianas College Board Members, NMC president Dr. Carmen Fernandez, NMC Foundation officers, and Mendiola's proud parents and family.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

CONGRATULATIONS!

On Dec. 18, 2009, James William K. Ripple, center, a resident of San Vicente, Saipan and a Mount Carmel School graduate, graduated from San Jose State University in San Jose, California with a bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering. He is a member of the American Society of Civil Engineers, American Concrete Institute, Tau Beta Pi Engineering Honor Society, and Chi Epsilon Civil Engineering Honor Society. He will be pursuing a graduate degree in Environmental and Geotechnical Engineering. In this photo are his parents Jim and Agnes Ripple.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

BIRTHDAY SHOUTOUT

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Happy 1st birthday to our angel Shanelle Juanaleen Marie Manalo Hocog, shown here with her Mom. We love you very much and we pray that you will have many more birthdays to come! Greetings come from Mommy and Daddy.

Flashback

A LOOK BACK AT PAST YEARS' HEADLINES

Jan. 5, 1999

Tourism still wobbly

Continental Micronesia has projected a three percent decline in Japanese traffic in Micronesia and Hawaii as the Japanese economy remains in the dump. Japan, the world's second largest economy, plunged in deepest recession since World War II after the collapse of the speculative "bubble" economy in the late 1980s. Wally Dias, staff vice president for sales and promotions, said the airline has no plan to add flights or new routes in Micronesia and Asia as consumer confidence remains weak. "We're just hoping it won't go down further so that we can just fill up the current capacity," said Dias.

'$100K deposit shouldn't be kept idle'

House Ways and Means Committee chair Rep. Karl T. Reyes yesterday stressed the need to ease the requirement on the $100,000 security deposit imposed on foreign investments in the wake of the plan to establish the first free trade zone in the Northern Marianas. He said the cash bond should be converted into more tangible investments, such as an additional capital money for business expansion, in what may serve as another incentive to attract potential investors into the commonwealth. While the House has approved a measure removing the cash requirement, the Senate has yet to tackle the proposal despite urgent calls from the business sector to hasten its passage.

Jan. 5, 2001

Workers ordered to support claims

U.S. District Judge Alex R. Munson has ordered garment factory workers suing their employers on Saipan to back allegations they were forced to pay recruitment fees in order to work on the island. He granted partly the two motions filed by garment manufacturers seeking to dismiss and strike the claims from the $1 billion class-action lawsuit. In his ruling issued the other day, the federal judge gave "one last opportunity" for the plaintiffs—who are unnamed guest workers employed by the local garment industry—to file an amended complaint within 20 days.

DLNR extends Pohnpei food ban

Lands and Natural Resources Secretary Joaquin A. Tenorio has extended for the seventh month since June last year the emergency order of quarantine banning the entry of food products from Pohnpei in light of a cholera epidemic in the Micronesian island. In an official order released yesterday, Dr. Tenorio warned that the risk posed by food originating from Pohnpei is potentially greater than the risk presented by food items imported from other FSM states. "There is currently a vibrio cholera epidemic in Pohnpei and it is important that the health of the people of the Commonwealth be protected," the DLNR chief stated. Under the new emergency order, DLNR has instructed Agriculture Quarantine Inspectors to thoroughly inspect airline luggage tags on food cargo, personal baggage, coolers, and all the other types of packages coming from FSM via Guam to determine the point of embarkation.

Jan. 5, 2003

Govt: Action-filled 2003

Gov. Juan N. Babauta gathered members of his Cabinet early this week to set goals for 2003-a time that the chief executive anticipates to be "probably the most defining year of his administration," his public information officer said Friday. Peter Callaghan, the administration's spokesperson, said that Cabinet members were encouraged to think of ways to reduce costs and increase revenues. "He wants cooperation and support from all his Cabinet members to address the serious issues faced by the Commonwealth. He described 2002 as probably the worst year we've ever had economically.

Tighter seaport security coming

Commonwealth Ports Authority Executive Director Carlos H. Salas yesterday disclosed that the 300-foot security rule at the seaport will be implemented as soon as the U.S. Department of Transportation and the U.S. Coast Guard set the date for its enforcement. Salas pointed out that enforcement of the security rule will automatically follow the federal agencies' issuance of a specific date, regardless of the ongoing discussion with the Marianas Public Lands Authority for additional public land at the Port of Saipan. He added that the discussion on the 300-foot security rule at all U.S. seaports included additional funding needed for the Maritime Transportation Security Act of 2002, which was approved by the U.S. House of Representatives in November 2002.

OAG: Beware of 'fashion' contact lenses

A CNMI resident recently complained to the Office of the Attorney General concerning her granddaughter's purchase of "fashion" contact lenses from a retail store (Bali Fashion) on Middle Road in Saipan. The lenses were sold to the young woman without a prescription. She developed serious eye complications and had to receive medical treatment including diagnosis and prescribed medicine.

The Attorney General's Investigative Unit began an investigation and learned that the merchant was in fact, selling the "fashion" lenses to customers who did not have prescriptions for the lenses. Bali Fashion cooperated fully with the investigation and numerous pairs of lenses were removed from the stream of commerce. Bali Fashion has ceased selling the contact lenses and is currently in discussions with the Office of the Attorney General to reach an agreement as to compensation for persons injured by the illegal sales.

If you have purchased contact lenses (even "fashion" lenses) in the CNMI from a merchant without a valid prescription you should seek a medical eye exam immediately, the OAG said.

The sale of contact lenses, even so-called "fashion" lenses, requires a prescription in the CNMI. Any merchant in the CNMI who sells contact lenses (even if the lens power is -0.00) without a prescription from a licensed medical practitioner is violating CNMI law as well as federal regulations and should be reported to the authorities immediately.

The Office of the Attorney General has interviewed local eye care professionals and compiled a list of Frequently Asked Questions concerning "fashion" contact lenses.

1. What are the dangers of buying (and wearing) contact lenses without a prescription. Could you go blind or do other permanent damage?

David Hardt, O.D: Contact lenses are in direct contact with the eye. Because of this, they carry significant medical risks if they are not fitted properly or if they are not properly cared for. A dirty pair of glasses, for example, may blur or distort the vision, but a dirty contact lens can result in a serious infection that can damage or even destroy the eye. A few years ago, a patient on Saipan was sold ill-fitting contact lenses without a prescription, and developed a corneal ulcer that nearly led to permanent vision loss. She was treated by Dr. Khorram and myself, and fortunately we were able to save her eye. Dr. Khorram and I subsequently testified at a hearing of the Medical Profession Licensing Board regarding this case. When I was the director of the contact lens service at Loma Linda University School of Medicine in California, I saw several blind eyes that were caused by contact lens complications. This is fortunately rare, but the risk is the reason that federal and CNMI law and regulations require contact lenses to be sold only by prescription.

Dr. David Khorram, MD: Since contact lenses sit on the surface of the eye, the lens must be fit to the eye. If the fit is not correct, there is definite risk of causing damage, which can include blindness.

Dr. Mark Robertson, OD: Contact lenses interact with the eye surface. When an eye doctor fits contact lenses, he looks at several factors to optimize that interaction. Contact lenses are capable of permanently damaging the eye, and there are cases of blindness which have resulted.

2. If the box says -0.00, do you still need a prescription?

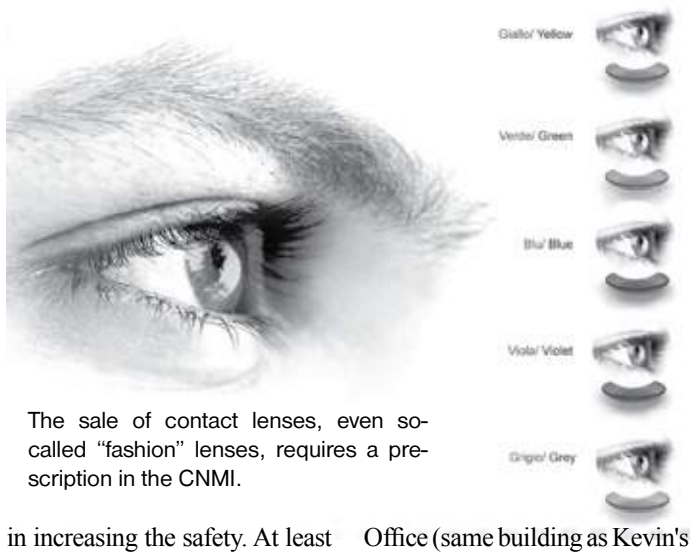
Dr. David Khorram, MD: Yes, there are typically three numbers associated with a CL perscription. The one most people are aware of is the power, which usually is pretty close to the prescription in your glasses. But in reality, the two other numbers are more important since they are the ones that make sure the lens fits your eyeball correctly. One of these numbers is a measure of the curve of the lens, and the other is the diameter of the lens. Together, they determine how tightly or loosely a lens fits on your eye. You don't want a lens to be either too tight or too loose, because it can cause damage. Think of shoes. If they're too tight, or too loose, they can cause difficulties. The problem with contact lenses, however, is that they can be comfortable, and still be too tight or too loose and be causing permanent damage. That's why it's important to get the lenses fit properly.

David Hardt, O.D.: Yes. A contact lens prescription includes not only the power of the lens, but also the curvature, diameter, material/brand, etc. A lens with a power of 0.00 is like a piece of window glass—it doesn't change the focus of light passing through it. A lens with no power, if it does not fit properly, carries exactly the same risks of a lens with a different power.

Dr. Mark Robertson, OD: [T]he reason for a need for prescription stems from the fact that the lens interacts with the eye. A poorly fitting -0.00 lens is much more dangerous to wear than is a well-fitting "visual-corrective" contact lens.

3. What is the advantage to obtaining a prescription for contact lenses compared to just buying them from a non-licensed merchant?

Dr. Mark Robertson, OD: First of all, ANY wear of contact lenses entails some risk. Being fit by a competent professional is only the first step in increasing the safety. At least as important is properly caring for the lenses AND seeing the fitting professional frequently for follow-up evaluations. Eye doctors fitting contact lenses are trained for the following:



The sale of contact lenses, even so-called "fashion" lenses, requires a prescription in the CNMI.

I. evaluating eye health to see that the patient is likely to be able to wear contact lenses safely and successfully.

II. evaluating the lenses on eye to make sure that the fit is optimal.

III. knowing what to look for in follow-up visits to catch unanticipated changes early.

IV. educating patients as to risks so that the patients make informed choices.

David Hardt, O.D.: Contact lenses can only be sold by prescription. …The issue is whether they are supplied accurately according to a written prescription for a licensed doctor. …[A]s a practical matter frequent errors may be made if contact lenses are supplied by people that aren't very familiar with them.

Dr. David Khorram, MD: Well, it's required by law that you have a prescription to purchase contact lenses, which indicates how vitally important it is. The main thing is that the prescription ensures the lens is fit correctly to your eye. The other thing I would add, is that once you have a prescription, you can buy the lenses anywhere, including from the internet. The prescription needs to be renewed annually, because even lenses that fit well can over time cause problems, and it's important to make sure things remain healthy. We ask our patients to come in at six month intervals for a courtesy lens check to make sure the fit is still healthy.

4. Where are the licensed places in the CNMI to get prescriptions for contact lenses?

Dr. David Khorram, MD: You can get a prescription for contact lenses from any licensed ophthalmologist or optometrist in the CNMI. Dr. David Khorram, MD and Dr. Mark Robertson, OD are available at Marianas Eye Institute, and the Hardt brothers are optometrists available at Hardt Eye Clinic.

■ Hardt Eye Clinic - Beach Road Office (between Mega-Byte and Triple-J Motors) 235-2030, Fax 235-2033

■ Hardt Eye Clinic - Kagman Office (same building as Kevin's Video and Kagman Post Office) 256-2020, Fax 256-2015

■ Marianas Eye Institute - Beach Road (across from 13 Fisherman Park) 235-9090, Fax 235-9091

5. Do these places (see answer to #4) also sell fashion lenses?

Dr. Mark Robertson, OD: Yes. And once the prescription is established, *then* the patient can purchase the lenses elsewhere (over the internet, etc.). But, wherever they purchase the actual lenses, it is important that they return to their fitter for frequent evaluation.

6. How much does a prescription for lenses generally cost? How much does a set of fashion lenses generally cost?

David Hardt, O.D.: There are a very large variety of contact lenses available. Almost all the contact lenses we use are disposable, and vary in price from about 50 cents per lens to around ten dollars per lens. The most popular lenses are single use disposables that cost 50 to 75 cents each (about $1 to $1.50 per use for two eyes) and two-week disposables (discarded every 14 days) that cost around $4.00 per lens. For very complicated cases, we occasionally use custom designed contact lenses that can cost up to $250 or $300 per lens. Fitting the contact lenses, including training in proper care and handling and follow-up visits to make sure the lenses are adapted to properly, is necessary when the contact lenses are initially purchased. At Hardt Eye Clinic, the fee for this service varies with the type of lenses required, but in most cases is less than $100.

Dr. Mark Robertson, OD: For a non-complicated case, Marianas Eye Institute charges $90 for the fitting. Except in unusual cases (where trial lenses are not available due to the patient's needed parameters being unusual), this *includes* the first set of lenses. Most lenses nowadays are then sold in multipacks of 6 lenses, usually around $45 per multipack. Again, if the patient has unusual eye parameters the cost can be more.

7. If a person has purchased and is wearing lenses without a prescription, what should that person do? Should she immediately stop wearing the lenses? What else?

David Hardt, O.D.: They should call for an appointment, or walk in at any of the eye clinics, for an eye examination. They should bring the contact lenses to the examination. In some cases, the lenses may fit well and they could continue to wear the same type of lens. In other cases, the lenses may need to be changed to avoid problems. In a few cases, there may be a medical condition of the eyes that makes any contact lens wear risky and ill-advised. Contact lenses obtained without a prescription should not be worn until they can be evaluated by a doctor.

Dr. David Khorram, MD: They should take the lenses out, and stop wearing them until they are able to get a contact lens fitting.

Dr. Mark Robertson, OD: Certainly the safest thing to do is to stop wearing the lenses. If the person is interested in obtaining contact lenses, she first needs to establish that her eyes are healthy, and then be fitted with appropriate lenses.

Disclaimer: The Office of the Attorney General compiled this list of Frequently Asked Questions and answers as a service to the press and consuming public. This is not intended as specific medical advice, and people are encouraged to direct any questions to a licensed medical professional.

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Attorney for Bank of Guam

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT
FOR THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

BANK OF GUAM, **Plainfiff,**	**Civil Action No. 08-0126-CV**
CARMEN C. CABRERA, **Defendants.**	**NOTICE OF SALE**

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that, pursuant to an Order issued by the Court in this matter on September 1, 2009, I will sell, at public auction, to the highest bidder, on the terms and conditions set forth hereinbelow, all of the right, title, and interest of Defendant in the following raw, undeveloped property, consisting of 1,098 sq.m., located in Gualo Rai, Saipan: Tract No. 21825-4-1-R1, as more particularly described on Drawing/Cadastral Plat No. 2098/84, the original of which was recorded September 18, 1984 as Document No. 84-1962 at the Commonwealth Recorder's Office, Saipan, CNMI.

Date, Time, and Place of Sale. The sale will be held on January 20, 2010, at the hour of 10:00 am, at the Law Office of Robert T. Torres, Plata Drive, Chalan Kiya, Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. The sale will be open to the general public and will be held in reserve.

Terms and Conditions of Sale.

1. Rights and duties of Auctioneer. Consistent with the custom and usage and applicable laws of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands governing auction sales with reserve, the auctioneer shall have the following rights and duties in conducting the auction sale:

   a) withdraw the property listed for sale in the public announcement before sale or before bid for such property is accepted.

   b) To adjourn the sale without notice at any time before any specific property is sold, without incurring any liability whatsoever thereby; and

   c) To reject any and all bids.

2. Bids. Tentative bids may be submitted in advance for any and all of the property listed in the notice. Such bids shall not be binding, expect that the highest of such bids will automatically be considered the opening bid for the property. Bids may be entered in person, in writing, or by telephone to Robert T. Torres, Attorney at Law, Plata Drive, Chalan Kiya, PO Box 5003758 CK, Saipan MP 96950, Phone: 670-234-7859'; Fax: 670-234-5749.

3. Deposit; Payment. A deposit of ten percent (10%) of the purchase price must be paid on the day of the auction sale. The remaining balance will be due within ten days of the auction sale. All payments must be made by cash, cashier's check, or credit card. Failure to make payment of the remaining balance within ten days will result in forfeiture by the buyer of the 10% deposit, and any and all of the buyer's rights, title and interest in any of the property will revert to the Bank of Guam.

4. Change of Terms. Auctioneer and the Bank of Guam reserve the right to change any of the terms of conduct an enforcement of sale by announcement, written or oral, made before the auction sale or at the commencement thereof, and such change or changes, by virtue of this clause shall be binding on any buyer by constructive notice.

5. Inspection and No Warranty. Bidders are cautioned to inspect the title and property; contact the Law Office of Robert T. Torres for scheduled viewing and inspection times. The interests of the property are being sold "AS IS" and without warranty. Failure to inspect the real property will not constitute a ground for any claim, adjustment or rescission by any buyer.

DATED this 25th day of November, 2009.

/s/ Robert T. Torrres, Auctioneer

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
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EDITORIAL

Soft on terror? Not this President

There is, it seems evident, more than enough blame to go around in the botched handling of the botched Christmas bombing. Not for some Republicans. With former Vice President Dick Cheney in the lead, they have embarked on an ugly course to use the incident to inflict maximum political damage on President Obama. That's bad enough, but their scurrilous line of attack is even worse. The claim that the incident shows the president's fecklessness in the war on terror is unfounded—no matter how often it is repeated.

These critics have set up a straw Obama, a weak and naive leader who allegedly takes terrorism lightly, thinks that playing nicely with terrorists will make them stop, and fails to understand the threat that the United States faces from violent extremists. Cheney said that the incident had made "clear once again that President Obama is trying to pretend we are not at war." Likewise, Republican Study Committee Chairman Tom Price, R-Ga., called on Obama to "recognize that we are at war with a murderous enemy who will not relent because we heed political correctness, acquiesce to international calls for deference or close the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay." Rep. Peter Hoekstra, R-Mich., the ranking Republican on the House Intelligence Committee, said that Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano "and the rest of the Obama administration view their role as law enforcement, first responders dealing with the aftermath of an attack. And we believe in a forward-looking approach to stopping these attacks before they happen."

There are two ways to show how baseless these attacks are: examining Obama's words and examining his actions.

Words first. "Evil does exist in the world," Obama said in accepting the Nobel Peace Prize. "Negotiations cannot convince al-Qaida's leaders to lay down their arms." In his weekly radio speech Saturday, he disposed of the war-vs.-law-enforcement canard, pointing out that in his inaugural address he made it clear that "0ur nation is at war against a far-reaching network of violence and hatred and that we will do whatever it takes to defeat them and defend our country, even as we uphold the values that have always distinguished America among nations." "

But actions speak louder, and Obama's actions—often at the cost of enraging his party's liberal base—have also demonstrated tenacity and pragmatism blended with a necessary reassessment of the flawed policies of his predecessors and a recommitment to the rule of law. He wants to close the Guantanamo Bay prison, which is all to the good given its stain on the national character, but he has delayed that goal until acceptable alternatives can be found. He has brought criminal charges against some terrorists, but he has also sent others to be tried by military tribunals. He has invoked the authority of the executive to have lawsuits dismissed because they risk exposing state secrets. In addition to the new troop deployments, he has aggressively used predator drones to strike at terrorists, including outside Afghanistan. Even before the failed attack, his administration has been working aggressively with Yemeni authorities to deal with extremists there.

See SOFT on Next Page

Article XII: A brief summary of its history and provisions

By HOWARD P. WILLENS and DEANNE C. SIEMER
SPECIAL TO THE SAIPAN TRIBUNE

Editor's Note: This article was submitted for publication by the Committee to Change Article XII, with permission from the authors. Due to its length, it is being published here as a four-part series.

Last of a four-part series

In March 1977, the Northern Marianas voters approved the Constitution by a 93 percent affirmative vote. The next step was approval by the U.S. government, which was delayed unnecessarily because the U.S. Department of Justice did not understand the pertinent provisions in the Covenant.

After approval by the federal government in October 1977, the political parties nominated candidates for the positions in the new government. After a very vigorous campaign the voting for the first Commonwealth constitutional government took place in December 1977. The new government took office on Jan. 9, 1978.

As anticipated by some of its critics, Article XII became a source of controversy and much litigation during the 1980s as economic development began to transform the Saipan landscape. Foreign investors were not entitled to own land but could lease for up 40 years under the original provisions of Article XII. This period was later extended to 55 years. Many transactions were challenged as not in compliance with Article XII.

Eventually Article XII was itself challenged as unconstitutional. The challengers contended that section 805 of the Covenant as implemented by Article XII discriminated against U.S. citizens who did not fall within the definition of the Northern Marianas descent. They argued that this violated the privileges and immunities clause of Article 4 of the U.S. Constitution, and the equal protection clause of Amendment 14, which had previously been held to be part of the Fifth Amendment applicable to the federal government. In their view, the U.S. Congress lacked the authority to approve such violations of the U.S. Constitution.

In 1992, the U.S. Appeals Court for the Ninth Circuit upheld section 805 and Article XII. The court relied on a group of cases decided early in the 20th century called the Insular Cases. Under these decisions the U.S. Congress has broad authority to deal with unincorporated territories of the United States like the Northern Mariana Islands. In particular, the court held that Congress was entitled to accommodate the unique cultural and social conditions and values of the new Commonwealth. In evaluating Section 805 of the Covenant the court emphasized the scarcity of land in the Northern Marianas and the need to protect the local community for a fixed numbers of years. It stressed that land was the only significant asset that the people of Commonwealth had, and recognized that the people were willing for a limited number of years to sacrifice the short-term economic gain that might be achieved by outing their land on the open market. The United States Supreme Court declined to review these Appeals Court decisions.

The provisions of Article XII can be changed by the people, like any other provision of the Commonwealth Constitution. Amendments to the Constitution can be proposed by the Northern Marianas Legislature, by a Constitutional Convention, or by the people directly. In order to become effective, however, the proposed amendment must be approved by the people. Under the Covenant the Northern Marianas people are not free to eliminate all such restrictions until 2011.

In summary, the Covenant requires Article XII and its basic restrictions on land transactions to continue until at least 2011. The Constitution requires Article XII to continue after 2011 until voters pass an amendment to end or revise it. The Covenant governs the basic limitation requiring ownership of land by persons of Northern Marianas descent. The Constitution governs the definition of Northern Marianas descent, the treatment of spouses and adopted children, the length of permissible leaseholds, and other such matters.

Covenant amendment requires United States approval. Section 805 of the Covenant is one of the provisions protected by the mutual consent provision of the Covenant. Any change in Section 805, therefore, would require the approval of both of the Northern Mariana Islands and the United States government.

No such United States approval is required for amendments to the Marianas Constitution. Amendments to the Constitution require a majority vote if the amendment is proposed by the Legislature or two-thirds if proposed by a Constitutional Convention. It is our view that all properly registered voters in the Commonwealth may vote on a proposed amendment to Article XII. No United States citizen who is qualified to vote may be excluded under the applicable provisions of the United States Constitution as interpret by the United States Supreme Court.

That concludes our presentation on Article XII.

EDITORIAL POLICY The *Saipan Tribune* welcomes comments on any article, column, editorial, or topic that may be of interest to the public. Letters to the editor must include the name, address, and contact number of the contributor. Letters that are critical in nature should focus on issues, not personalities. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

Employment eligibility verification: The employer's burden

IMMIGRATION FORUM

By MAYA KARA and BRUCE MAILMAN
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Maya Kara is a native of Hungary and comes to the practice of law by way of her interest in Asian history. Bruce Mailman is a native of Bakersfield, California and was a private investigator in California prior to becoming a lawyer. Both have lived and practiced law in the CNMI for over 20 years, Maya in government service and Bruce in private practice. They are married and are partners in the law firm of Mailman & Kara, LLC in Garapan, Saipan.

As of Nov. 28, 2009, all employers in the CNMI are required to keep records with respect to the eligibility of their employees to work under the immigration laws of the United States. This requirement arises out of one of the basic immigration policy issues with which the United States has struggled for over 100 years: How can the government reasonably protect employment opportunities for its citizens while at the same time allow sufficient immigration to fill employer needs and keep the economy humming? Because legislation always tends to lag far behind reality, it is evident that current laws do not sufficiently address the tension between these two competing interests: preserving jobs for citizens versus making foreign labor available to American employers. Proof of this is the presence of approximately 12 million undocumented aliens in the U.S., some 8.3 million of whom are employed, according to an April 2009 report by the Pew Hispanic Center titled "A Portrait of Unauthorized Immigrants in the United States." At the heart of the current immigration debate is what to do about these millions of working "illegals" who are clearly making a significant contribution to the U.S. economy.

One of the U.S. government's efforts to reduce the numbers of illegals has been to impose sanctions on employers who hire them. This effort is resisted by employers who wish to retain the ability to hire inexpensive foreign labor and by state and local governments who acknowledge the economic benefits of unauthorized workers. A result of this resistance has been uneven enforcement, depending on the political climate in various states at various times. The actual value to the U.S. and its citizens of increased enforcement is a hot button topic in U.S. immigration.

But that debate is outside the scope of today's column; we are primarily interested in providing practical advice to the CNMI public. The purpose of the requirement that employers fill out a Form I-9 for employees and retain the forms for inspection by federal authorities is to deter the hiring of illegal aliens. The form requires a two-part documentary verification of identity and of authorization to work in the United States.

The following is a brief overview of employer obligations regarding employment verification. For the CNMI, a special version of the form designated Form I-9 CNMI must be used.

What is a Form I-9 CNMI?

This is a form published by USCIS that must be filled out by employers to verify the identity and work authorization of their employees in order to ensure that all employees are authorized to work in the United States, or in the CNMI.

Who must fill out a Form I-9 CNMI?

All CNMI employers must fill out a Form I-9 CNMI for all employees hired after Nov. 28, 2009. The requirement does not apply for employees hired prior to Nov. 29, 2009, nor does it apply to renewals of current employees after that date, unless there is a gap in employment.

Does the requirement apply only to foreign workers?

No, it does not. The requirement applies to all workers regardless of immigration status or nationality. U.S. citizen workers have automatic work authorization in the U.S., so they only need to document their identity and citizenship. Foreign workers need to document identity and immigration status, and provide some form of authorization to work in the U.S.

Are the any exceptions to filling out an I-9 CNMI?

Yes, there are five exceptions to the employer's obligation:

- For employees hired before Nov. 7, 1986 and continuously employed ever since;
- For employees employed in a private home for casual domestic work on an irregular or sporadic basis;
- For independent contractors;
- For employees hired though a manpower agency; and
- For employees not physically working on U.S. soil.

Whose responsibility is it to fill out the form?

The obligation to comply with the process belongs to the employer; it is the employer who is liable for sanctions if the requirement is not fulfilled. However, Section 1 of the form must be filled out by the employee. So, it could be said that filing out the form is a joint obligation of both employer and employee.

When does Form I-9 CNMI need to be filled out?

The employee must complete Section 1 of the form no later than the first day of work. The employer must complete the form before three business days after the start of employment. It is important that the form be filled out, even if employer or employee miss the deadline; we have been told that the government inspectors will accept reasonable explanations. It is a good idea, if you miss a deadline, to put a memorandum in the file with the I-9, explaining why the deadline was missed.

How long does the employer need to retain the forms and keep them available for federal inspection?

The employer can choose to retain records physically or electronically or both. The employer may retain records of the documentation supporting the form. The completed I-9 CNMI must be retained for (a) three years after the date of hire, or (b) one year after the employee is separated from the employer, whichever is longer.

What documents may the employer accept as proof of identity and of work authorization?

There is a list of documents that is quite extensive that is included in the instructions to Form I-9 CNMI titled "List of Acceptable Documents." We will not list them here. Note, however, that the employer may only accept original documents and the documents must be current, not expired.

Are there documents specific to the CNMI that can be used even if they are not listed?

Yes. Currently, documents sufficient to prove both identity and work authorization in the CNMI include:

- Foreign unexpired passport and CNMI Alien Entry (red band on top) permit issued prior to 11/28/09;
- Foreign unexpired passport and CNMI Permanent Resident Card;
- Foreign unexpired passport and temporary work authorization issued prior to 11/28/09 and not yet expired.

Note that these provisions leave several questions unanswered, such as the validity of an Umbrella Permit and what is the validity of a CNMI Entry Permit (blue band on top) as a qualifying CNMI document. We have been told by USCIS that the government considers an umbrella permit to be a work authorization until Nov. 27, 2011, so long as the status underlying the authorization is maintained, and we intend to suggest to USCIS that the form be amended.

What are the potential sanctions that employers may incur for failure to comply with the Form I-9 requirement?

There are a variety of civil and criminal penalties ranging from an injunction, to monetary fines to terms of imprisonment, depending on the nature of the offense charged. Examples are fines of up to $3,000 per employee for knowingly hiring or continuing to employ unauthorized aliens; up to five years in prison for use of false statements in filling out the Form I-9; and up to $6,500 per document for document fraud.

Again, this is just a brief overview. A very detailed *Handbook for Employers* as well as the Form I-9 CNMI, with instructions, is available online at www.uscis.gov.

The Pew report, one of several articles we consulted for today's column, can be found at http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1190/portrait-unauthorized-immigrants-states. Other estimates of illegal immigrants range from 7 million to 20 million; see, for example, "Illegal Immigrants: How Many Are There," *Christian Science Monitor*, May 16, 2006, http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0516/p01s02-ussc.html. The overall number of undocumented immigrants appears to be declining somewhat; see, for example, "A Bad Sign – Illegal Immigrants are Leaving," *Boston Globe*, Sept. 9, 2009, http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial_opinion/oped/articles/2009/09/06/a_bad_sign - illegal_immigrants_are_leaving/. With regard to the debate on the merits of enhanced employment enforcement, see, for example, the Cato Institute's Trade Policy Analysis #40, "Restriction or Legalization? Measuring the Economic Benefits of Immigration Reform," August 13, 2009, http://www.cato.org/pub_display.php?pub_id=10438. Wikipedia, www.wikipedia.com, also has useful articles on these topics.

Disclaimer: The information contained in this column is intended as general information only, and not as individual legal advice. Readers should obtain professional legal advice before taking action with respect to their individual situations. Readers may submit questions regarding federalization or immigration issues to the authors by email to lexmarianas@pticom.com. Readers may also e-mail written questions through the Saipan Tribune at editor@saipantribune.com.

Letters to the Editor

Unresolved!

As we resolve to do a little better in 2010, let's not forget something that was NOT resolved in 2009. There was a 9-year-old girl who was brutally choked, raped, and left for dead. Resolving this is a chance for the CNMI to make 2010 a safer and more responsible year.

If any of you saw the musical *Scrooge* a few years ago, this girl is the one who played the boy part of Tiny Tim. More recently, she was the lead in the musical *It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas*. She has also been a star in school. But you all know that her name, race, religion, nationality, etc. don't matter. It matters that she is a human child of God like every other 9-year-old girl in the CNMI.

I am writing because I want to be a better person, I want my daughter to be more whole, and because I care about the people of CNMI. When the police first came to our home, I told them what I knew and invited them to interview and collect DNA from myself and other members of my household. I care about each member of my household to the extent that if any were found guilty of such a murderous and heinous crime, I would want him/her to take full responsibility as early as possible because the longer such goes unresolved, the worse it is for the criminal as well as the host community.

I have good reason to believe there are several who know who the guilty party is but don't feel they can speak out because of friend or family connections. There was a conversation overheard at a beach party. High school students have also told me things they have heard, but couldn't give me names because of friend or family ties. I invite those who know something and who care about the victim, their own community, or even the guilty party to help all affected. Please call the FBI at 322-6934. The only reason that I mentioned some personal information is because we are now safely an ocean away in a safe community where she is receiving excellent counseling to overcome embedded fears. Also, there is now little chance she will read this until she is ready. I am thankful for the rich four years my family was able to enjoy on Saipan, and I long for the time I can write a letter of praise for this beautiful island community who will have been able to resolve this serious issue and make 2010 a safer and more responsible year. I feel a little better already. Thank you. With deep affection and bright hope,

Dr. E. Roland Brown
Cedar City, Utah

SOFT

From Page 10

It is possible to disagree with the administration's decision to bring criminal charges against the suspect in the failed airplane bombing, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, although we think that was the proper course. It is possible to fault, as we have, some of the administration's public statements in the immediate aftermath of the attack. And as the president has acknowledged, the incident revealed failures in intelligence and in security screening that must be urgently identified and corrected. The country would benefit from a serious and bipartisan effort in Congress to ensure that the lessons of the Christmas attack are learned. A groundless campaign to portray Obama as soft on terror can only detract from that effort.

(c) 2010, The Washington Post

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam Homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

The Weather

5-Day Forecast for Saipan and Tinian

TODAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Partly cloudy. Slight chance of showers. East winds 10 to 15 mph.	Partly cloudy. Slight chance of showers. East winds 10 to 15 mph.	Partly cloudy. Slight chance of showers. East winds 10 to 15 mph.	Mostly cloudy and breezy with scattered showers.	Mostly cloudy and breezy with scattered showers.
▲86° ▼76°	▲86° ▼76°	▲86° ▼76°	▲85° ▼76°	▲85° ▼76°

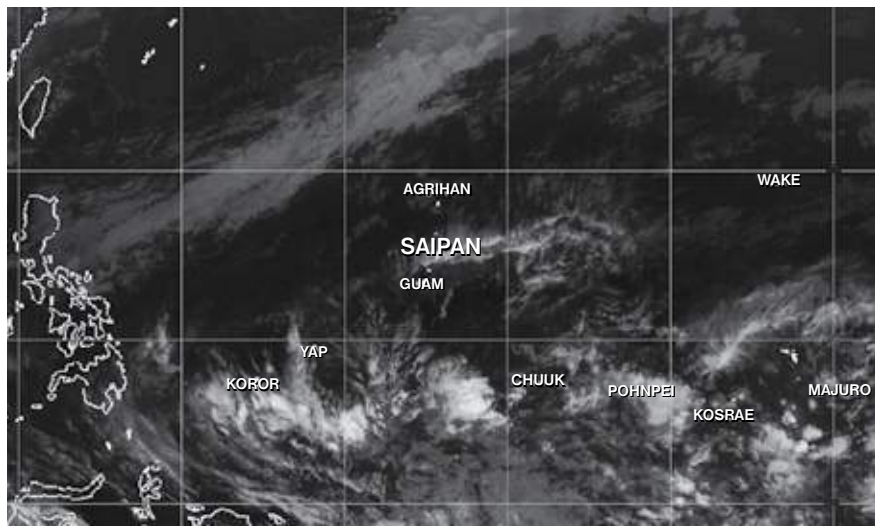
Micronesia

Guam and Rota	Showers	▲83	▼75
Palau	Mostly Cloudy	▲86	▼78
Yap	Mostly Cloudy	▲88	▼76
Chuuk	Showers	▲89	▼78
Pohnpei	Cloudy	▲87	▼80
Kosrae	Showers	▲87	▼78
Majuro	Showers	▲87	▼78

Around The Globe

Auckland	Sunny	▲72	▼54
Beijing	Sunny	▲16	▼ 3
Hong Kong	Showers	▲66	▼57
Honolulu	Showers	▲80	▼69
London	Cloudy	▲34	▼33
Los Angeles	Mostly Sunny	▲76	▼50
Manila	Showers	▲86	▼75
Melbourne	Mostly Sunny	▲89	▼61
Miami	Partly Sunny	▲61	▼38
New York	Cloudy	▲34	▼27
Osaka	Showers	▲42	▼30
Paris	Sunny	▲29	▼26
Pusan	Mostly Sunny	▲34	▼16
Rome	Rain	▲55	▼50
Salem	Cloudy	▲86	▼64
San Francisco	Partly Sunny	▲58	▼47
Seoul	Flurries	▲18	▼ 3
Tokyo	Showers	▲50	▼33
Washington, DC	Cloudy	▲35	▼34

Yesterday's Satellite Image



PICTURE TIME: 1:00PM, MONDAY, JANUARY 4, 2010

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

A circulation is located near 25N143E. A cold front extends southwest of the circulation to 18N135E then continues as a shear line to 15N130E. Extensive cloud cover and scattered showers are found along and up to 350 miles northwest of the cold front. A second shear line stretches across much of the western Pacific from 18N180 to 15N160E through the Marianas near Guam at 13N145E to end near 11N130E. Cloudiness and patchy rain are found along and up to 170 miles north of the shear line from Guam eastward. A near-equatorial trough stretches from near 2N130E to 2N146E to end near the equator at 162E. Convergence north of the trough is generating scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms in a few areas. The first area is south of Palau and Yap between 3N and 7N from 132E to 143E. The second area is south of Puluwat between 4N and 7N from 145E to 150E. A third area is over Pohnpei within a triangular shaped area bounded by 4N161E to 8N156E to 7N162E back to 4N161E. A weak trough of low pressure extends from 4N168E to 1N168E. Scattered showers associated with the trough are located south of Jaluit between 2N and 5N from 166E to 171E. Trade-wind convergence is generating an area of scattered showers south of Majuro between the equator and 3N from 171E to 179E.

Tides

Saipan Harbor

4:51 AM	Today	Low Tide:	0.2 Feet
11:37 AM	Today	High Tide:	2.1 Feet
5:51 PM	Today	Low Tide:	0.8 Feet
10:53 PM	Today	High Tide:	1.7 Feet

Sunrise/Sunset

Today	6:43 AM	5:58 PM
Wednesday	6:43 AM	5:58 PM
Thursday	6:44 AM	5:59 PM
Friday	6:44 AM	5:59 PM
Saturday	6:44 AM	6:00 PM

Moonrise/Moonset

Today	10:35 AM	10:12 PM
Wednesday	11:31 AM	10:54 PM
Thursday		11:35 PM
Friday	12:26 AM	12:17 PM
Saturday	1:20 AM	1:01 PM

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF DECEMBER 22, 2009

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-ROTA (ROP)

C09597	11:30am	12:05pm	1, 7

ROTA (ROP)-GUAM

C09597	12:40pm	1:10pm	1, 7

SAIPAN-GUAM

C09317	4:25am	5:15am	Daily
C09313	8:30am	9:20am	Daily
C09597	11:30am	1:10pm	1, 7 via ROP
C09601	12:20pm	1:10pm	4, 5
C09603	3:15pm	4:05pm	Daily
C09605	6:20pm	7:10pm	Daily
C09599	9:20pm	10:10pm	Daily

SAIPAN-NAGOYA (NGO)

NW287	6:00am	7:30pm	Daily via NRT

SAIPAN-NARITA (NRT)

NW287	6:00am	8:40am	Daily
NW297	4:45pm	7:30pm	Daily

SAIPAN-BUSAN (PUS)

OZ608	3:20am	6:50am	1, 4, 5, 7

SAIPAN-SEOUL (ICN)

OZ604	2:10am	6:00am	1
OZ604	2:40am	6:30am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
OZ119	4:00am	11:25am	Daily via Osaka
		Arrive OSA	6:40am, leave OSA 9:30am
OZ606	3:20pm	7:00pm	2, 4, 6, 7

SAIPAN-SHANGHAI (PVG)

FM844	2:50am	5:40am	2, 6

SAIPAN-GUANGZHOU (CAN)

CZ3008	3:30am	6:40am	2, 6

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

OZ604/701	2:10am	11:50am	1 via ICN
OZ604/701	2:40am	11:50am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
OZ604/703	2:50am	11:25am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
OZ608/705	3:20am	1:30am+1	1, 5 via PUS
C09603/933	3:15pm	9:40pm	Daily via GUM
C09605/933	6:20pm	9:40pm	Daily via GUM
C09599/PR111	9:20pm	7:50am+1	1, 3, 5, 6, 7 via GUM

SAIPAN-HONG KONG

OZ604/721	2:10am	12:00pm	1 via ICN
OZ604/721	2:40am	12:00pm	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
OZ606/749	3:20pm	11:00pm	4, 6, 7 via ICN

ARRIVALS

ROTA (ROP)-SAIPAN

C09598	3:10am	3:45am	5, 6
C09312	1:20pm	1:55pm	6

GUAM-ROTA (ROP)

C09598	2:00am	2:30am	5, 6
C09312	12:10pm	12:40pm	6

GUAM-SAIPAN

C09316	2:00am	2:50am	1, 2, 3, 4, 7
C09598	2:00am	3:45am	5, 6 via ROP
C09596	7:00am	7:50am	Daily
C09600	10:05am	10:55am	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7
C09312	12:10pm	1:55pm	6 via ROP
C09602	1:50pm	2:40pm	1, 4, 5, 7
C09604	4:50pm	5:40pm	Daily
C09606	8:00pm	8:50pm	Daily

NAGOYA (NGO)-SAIPAN

NW288	12:05pm	1:20am+1	Daily via NRT

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

NW298	10:05am	2:50pm	Daily
NW288	8:45pm	1:20am+1	Daily

BUSAN (PUS)-SAIPAN

OZ607	9:00pm	2:10am+1	3, 4, 6, 7

SEOUL (ICN)-SAIPAN

OZ605	9:00am	2:20pm	2, 4, 6, 7
OZ120	7:10pm	2:20am+1	Daily via Osaka
		Arrive OSA	8:50pm, leave OSA 9:50pm
OZ603	7:40pm	1:10am+1	7
OZ603	8:10pm	1:30am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

SHANGHAI (PVG)-SAIPAN

FM843	7:15pm	1:50am+1	1, 5

GUANGZHOU (CAN)-SAIPAN

CZ3007	7:30pm	2:40am+1	1, 5

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

OZ716/605	12:30am	2:20pm	4 via ICN
OZ706/607	3:35am	2:10am+1	4, 7 via PUS
OZ702/603	1:10pm	1:10am+1	7 via ICN
OZ702/603	1:10pm	1:30am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via ICN
PR110/C09596	10:10pm	7:50am+1	1, 3, 5, 6, 7 via GUM
C0934/9596	11:10pm	7:50am+1	Daily via GUM
OZ704/605	11:55pm	2:20pm+1	1, 3, 5, 6 via ICN

HONG KONG-SAIPAN

OZ724/605	12:30am	2:20pm	2,4,6,7 via ICN
OZ750/605	1:00am	2:20pm	2,4,6,7 via ICN
OZ722/603	1:30pm	1:10am+1	7 via ICN
OZ722/603	1:30pm	1:30am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via ICN

Editor's Note: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); CO: Continental; FM: Shanghai Airlines; PR: Philippine Airlines; NW: Northwest; OZ: Asiana
ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)

FREEDOM AIR FLIGHT SCHEDULE

Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency
Guam-Rota			
FRE 100	7:00am	7:30am	Daily
Rota-Saipan			
FRE 100	7:50am	8:20am	Daily
Saipan-Rota			
FRE 200	9:00am	9:30am	Daily
Rota-Guam			
FRE 200	9:50am	10:15am	Daily
Guam-Rota			
FRE 300	4:00pm	4:30pm	Daily
Rota-Saipan			
FRE 300	4:50pm	5:25pm	Daily
Saipan-Rota			
FRE 400	6:00pm	6:30pm	Daily
Rota-Guam			
FRE 400	6:45pm	7:15pm	Daily
Saipan-Tinian			
FRE 101	6:45am	6:55am	Daily
FRE 103	7:30am	7:40am	Daily
FRE 105	8:00am	8:10am	Daily
FRE 107	8:40am	8:50am	Daily
FRE 109*	9:10am	9:20am	Daily
FRE 111*	10:45am	10:55am	Daily

Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency
FRE 113	11:40am	11:50am	Daily
FRE 115	1:00pm	1:10pm	Daily
FRE 117	2:30pm	2:40pm	Daily
FRE 119	4:00pm	4:10pm	Daily
FRE 121	4:40pm	4:50pm	Daily
FRE 123 *	5:40pm	5:50pm	Daily
FRE 125 *	6:00pm	6:10pm	Daily
Tinian-Saipan w/ connecting flights to Rota or Guam**			
FRE 102	7:05am	7:15am	Daily
FRE 104	7:50am	8:00am	Daily
FRE 106**	8:20am	8:30am	Daily
FRE 108**	9:00am	9:10am	Daily
FRE 110	10:00am	10:10am	Daily
FRE 112	11:05am	11:15am	Daily
FRE 114	12:00pm	12:10pm	Daily
FRE 116	1:30pm	1:40pm	Daily
FRE 118	2:50pm	3:00pm	Daily
FRE 120**	4:20pm	4:30pm	Daily
FRE 122**	5:00pm	5:10pm	Daily
FRE 124	6:05pm	6:15pm	Daily
FRE 126	6:20pm	6:30pm	Daily

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The *Saipan Tribune* accepts for FREE publication the following:

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- ISLAND SNAPSHOTS
  Birthdays, baptisms, christenings, family gatherings, reunions, club activities, and other community-related events.
- BIRTHDAY GREETINGS
  A way for families and friends to greet their loved ones, accompanied by a picture of the person celebrating his/her birthday.
- BUSINESS
  Corporate donations, volunteer work, promotions, granting of awards, team-building exercises, meetings and other activities by members of the business community.
- SAMU'T SARI
  Pictures from the islands' Filipino community, primarily focusing on Filipino activities, gatherings, get-togethers, volunteer work, etc.
- TRAVELOGUE
  Pictures of off-island travels. Contributors may submit up to 10 pictures for consideration.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- COMMUNITY BRIEFS
  Announcements of upcoming activities of organizations, community clubs, government agencies, and private companies.
- CAMPUS BULLETIN
  Announcements of upcoming activities in public and private schools, as well as calendar of activities. May include PTSA meetings, enrollment procedures.

REQUIREMENTS

For pictures:

- Photos should be original and not copyrighted. Contributors must have the right to allow the *Saipan Tribune* to publish the pictures.
- Digital pictures should be high-resolution (minimum of 800kb).
- Must have complete details (who, what, where, when), the name of contact person, and phone number.
- Photos must have been taken in the last two months.
- For birthday greetings, must be submitted no later than 12 noon of the previous day to make it to next day's edition.

For announcements:

- Must have complete details (who, what, where, when), the name of contact person, and a phone number.
- Must be submitted no later than 12 noon to make it to next day's edition.

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NMI CRIME STOPPERS

Anonymous tips can now be submitted through the following:

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- *11 on any PTI cellular phone
- Log on to the internet at www.nmicrimestoppers.com

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Business

Dubai to open world's highest tower

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP)—Dubai is set to open the world's tallest building amid tight security on Monday, celebrating the tower as a bold feat on the world stage despite the city state's shaky financial footing.

But the final height of the Burj Dubai—Arabic for Dubai Tower—remained a closely guarded secret on the eve of its opening. At a reported height of 2,684 feet (818 meters), it long ago vanquished its nearest rival, the Taipei 101 in Taiwan.

The Burj's record-seeking developers didn't stop there.

The building boasts the most stories and highest occupied floor of any building in the world, and ranks as the world's tallest structure, beating out a television mast in North Dakota. Its observation deck—on floor 124—also sets a record.

"We weren't sure how high we could go," said Bill Baker, the building's structural engineer, who is in Dubai for the inauguration. "It was kind of an exploration. ... A learning experience"

Baker, of Chicago-based architecture and engineering firm Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, said early designs for the Burj had it edging out the world's previous record-holder, the Taipei 101, by about 33 feet (10 meters). The Taiwan tower rises 1,667 feet (508 meters).

The Burj's developer, Emaar Properties, kept pushing the design higher even after construction began, eventually putting it about 984 feet (300 meters) taller than its nearest competitor, Baker said. He is keeping quiet about the exact height.

AP

One day ahead of the official inauguration, Burj Dubai the world's tallest building is seen, in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Sunday, Jan. 3, 2010.

Dubai's ruler will open the tapering metal-and-glass spire with a fireworks display Monday evening.

Security is expected to be tight. Local newspapers quoted Maj. Gen. Mohammed Eid al-Mansouri, head of the protective security and emergency unit for Dubai Police, saying more than 1,000 security personnel, including plainclothes police and sharpshooters, will be deployed to secure the site for the opening.

Work on the Burj Dubai began in 2004 and continued rapidly. At times, new floors were being added almost every three days, reflecting Dubai's raging push to reshape itself over a few years from a small-time desert outpost into a cosmopolitan urban giant packed with skyscrapers.

By January 2007, thousands of laborers, many of them brought in on temporary contracts from India, had completed 100 stories.

The finished product contains more than 160 floors. That is over 50 stories more than Chicago's Willis Tower, the tallest record-holder in the U.S. formerly known as the Sears Tower.

At their peak, some apartments in the Burj were selling for more than $1,900 per square foot, though they now can go for less than half that, said Heather Wipperman Amiji, chief executive of Dubai real estate consultancy Investment Boutique.

Fed: Regulation 1st defense against speculation

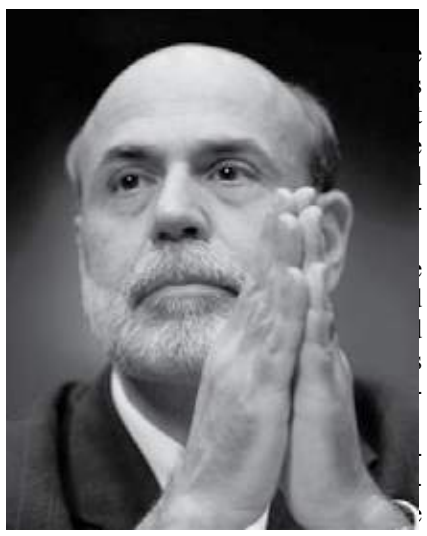
WASHINGTON (AP)—Stronger regulation is the best way to prevent financial speculation from getting out of hand and throwing the economy in a new crisis, Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke said Sunday.

But he didn't rule out higher interest rates to stop new speculative investment bubbles from forming.

The Fed chief's remarks were his most extensive on the subject since the housing market's tumble led to the gravest financial crisis since World War II—and perhaps the worst in modern history, in his view.

Critics blame the Fed for feeding that speculative boom in housing by holding interest rates too low for too long after the 2001 recession.

But Bernanke, in a speech to the American Economic Association's annual meeting in Atlanta, defended the central bank's actions. Extra-low rates were needed to get the economy and job creation back to full throttle after the Sept. 11 attacks and accounting scandals



AP

In this July 22, 2009 photo, Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke testifies on Capitol Hill in Washington.

effects if another crisis occurs," he said.

"However, if adequate reforms are not made, or if they are made but prove insufficient to prevent dangerous buildups of financial risks, we must remain open to using monetary policy as a supplementary tool," he added.

Speculative excesses are not easy to pinpoint in their early stages, he said, and using higher interest rates to combat them can hurt the economy.

For instance, rate increases in 2003 and 2004 to constrain the housing bubble could have "seriously weakened" the economy just when a recovery from the 2001 recession was starting, he said.

To help the country emerge from that recession, the Fed under then-Chairman Alan Greenspan cut its key bank lending rate from 6.5 percent in late 2000 to 1 percent in June 2003. It held rates at what was then a record low for a year. It's this action that critics blame for feeding the housing speculation.

Bernanke, however, said the expansion of complex mortgage products and the belief that housing prices would keep rising were the keys to inflating the housing bubble. As a result, lenders made home loans to people to finance houses they couldn't afford.

Passengers on US-bound flights face more screening

WASHINGTON (AP—Passengers flying into the United States from Nigeria, Yemen and other "countries of interest" will be subject to enhanced screening techniques, such as body scans and pat-downs, the Transportation Security Administration said Sunday.

Starting Monday, all passengers on U.S.-bound international flights will be subject to random screening. Airports are also directed to increase "threat-based" screening of passengers who may be acting in a suspicious manner.

In addition, anyone traveling from or though nations regarded as state sponsors of terrorism—as well as "other countries of interest"—will be required to go through enhanced screening. The TSA said those techniques include full-body pat-downs, carry-on bag searches, full-body scanning and explosive detection technology.

The State Department lists Cuba, Iran, Sudan and Syria as state sponsors of terrorism. The other countries whose passengers will face enhanced screening include Afghanistan, Algeria, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Somalia and Yemen.

Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, the Nigerian man who allegedly tried to set off an explosive device aboard a Northwest airliner on Christmas Day, has told U.S. investigators he received training and instructions from al-Qaida operatives in Yemen.

The TSA said the ability to enforce the new security measures is the "result of extraordinary cooperation from our global aviation partners."

Gadget makers focus on cost-effective temptations

By PETER SVENSSON
AP TECHNOLOGY WRITER

Electronics sales rebounded in the just-ended holiday season, but the industry's biggest event will still have the recession hanging over it. The International Consumer Electronics Show, which opens Wednesday, will be smaller than usual, with key products unveiled at prices that are far from extravagant.

Manufacturers will use the show in Las Vegas to trot out the devices they hope will keep consumers opening their wallets, despite high unemployment. TVs with 3-D displays, svelte laptops and e-book readers will be the hottest categories.

Gadget makers are in a much better mood than they were a year ago, when they were shocked by a 27 percent decline in holiday sales of electronics and appliances. In the month leading up to the 2009 Consumer Electronics Show, exhibitors were canceling because they were concerned about the economy, said Jason Oxman, senior vice president at the Consumer Electronics Association, the trade association that organizes CES.

In contrast, in the just-ended shopping season, revenue from electronics sales in the U.S. between Nov. 1 and Dec. 24 rose 5.9 percent from the same period of 2008, according to an estimate by MasterCard Advisors' SpendingPulse, which tracks all forms of payment, including cash. The analysts don't give a dollar figure.

And this time CES exhibitors were adding themselves to the lineup in the week before the show, Oxman said.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

January effect may set markets' tone for New Year

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP)—The stock market faces a big test as 2010 trading gets under way: whether its performance will be lifted by the phenomenon known as the January effect, or squelched by uncertainty about the economy. The January effect is the buying blip that often occurs with the start of a new tax year. Investors who sold stock before the end of the old year to claim a tax loss reinvest that money when trading begins again. Market historians and many investors are fascinated by the January effect because it often sets the tone for the rest of the year. In 2009, stocks were up at the start of January; although they were at 12-year lows two months later, they ended the year having had their best performance since 2003.

Tokyo bourse to launch high-speed trading system

TOKYO (AP)—The Tokyo Stock Exchange will launch a new high-speed trading system Monday, scrapping an antiquated, glitch-prone platform for one that aims to compete with major global rivals. The world's second-largest bourse after the New York Stock Exchange spent the weekend running final tests of its "Arrowhead" system, which can process trades in five milliseconds. That is 600 times faster than the two to three-seconds required until now, and roughly on par with its counterparts in New York and London. The TSE is banking on the system's faster trading speeds and higher reliability to bolster its prospects ahead of plans to go public later this year.

Oil touches $80 on US economy, demand optimism

SINGAPORE (AP)—Oil prices touched $80 a barrel Monday in Asia on optimism a gradual U.S. economic recovery in 2010 will boost demand for crude. Benchmark crude for February delivery was up 63 cents at $79.99 a barrel at midday Singapore time in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange after briefly changing hands at $80. The contract added 8 cents to settle at $79.36 on Thursday. Trading was closed Friday for the New Year holiday. Oil has jumped from $69 a barrel last month on signs the U.S. economy may be improving. The unemployment rate fell to 10 percent in November from 10.2 percent in October, and the government is scheduled to announced December's results later this week.

Nation

Man skirts security at NJ airport; flights stopped

NEWARK, N.J. (AP)—Authorities were searching for a man who walked through a screening checkpoint exit into the secure side of a terminal Sunday night at Newark Liberty International Airport, and flights were grounded and passengers being re-screened, an air safety official said.

A man was seen walking down an exit lane at Terminal C about 5:30 p.m., said Transportation Security Administration spokeswoman Ann Davis, and screening was halted in the Continental terminal while authorities looked at surveillance tapes to identify the man.

Passengers were then evacuated from the secure side of the terminal and moved to the open side to go through screening again to ensure that every passenger boarding a plane tonight out of the terminal was fully screened, Davis said in a statement. The security line was emptied, and passengers were waiting in check-in areas.

No announcements had been made over the airport's public-address system as of 9:45 p.m. Security officers were instructing passengers, who were expressing frustration over the situation.

AP

Passengers pass the time reading and sleeping after a security breach shut down Terminal C at Newark Liberty International Airport in Newark, N.J., Sunday, Jan. 3, 2010.

Alison Day, 47, of York, England, was supposed to leave for Manchester, England, at 7:30 Sunday night. She was traveling with a party of seven including an 18-month-old and 5-year-old.

"I'm not angry that this is happening, but I'm angry that there was a lack of organization," she said.

She said her party, headed home after a Caribbean cruise, was escorted out of Continental's lounge but given no further instructions.

Continental spokeswoman Susannah Thurston said it's an airport security issue not involving the Houston-based airline.

A spokesman said the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey is assisting with the possible security breach, and Davis had no update late Sunday night on the man who walked through the exit.

Also Sunday, the Transportation Security Administration said passengers flying into the United States from nations regarded as state sponsors of terrorism and "countries of interest" will be subject to enhanced screening techniques, such as body scans and pat-downs.

Starting Monday, all passengers on U.S.-bound international flights will be subject to random screening.

The State Department lists Cuba, Iran, Sudan and Syria as state sponsors of terrorism. The other countries whose passengers will face enhanced screening include Afghanistan, Algeria, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Somalia and Yemen.

Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, the Nigerian man who allegedly tried to set off an explosive device aboard a Northwest airliner on Christmas Day, has told U.S. investigators he received training and instructions from al-Qaida operatives in Yemen.

Obama adviser: No *smoking gun* in airline bomb plot

WASHINGTON (AP)—U.S. intelligence agencies did not miss a "smoking gun" that could have prevented an alleged attempt to blow up a U.S. airliner on Christmas Day, President Barack Obama's top counterterrorism adviser said Sunday.

White House aide John Brennan cited "lapses" and errors in the sharing of intelligence and clues about the Nigerian man accused in the foiled attempt.

"There is no smoking gun," Brennan said. "There was no single piece of intelligence that said, 'this guy is going to get on a plane.'"

The Transportation Security Administration announced Sunday that, starting Monday, passengers flying into the United States from Nigeria, Yemen and other "countries of interest" will be subject to enhanced screening techniques, such as body scans and pat-downs. All passengers on U.S.-bound international flights will be subject to random screening, the agency said.

Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, the Nigerian student who allegedly tried to set off an explosive device aboard the Northwest airliner, has told U.S. investigators he received training and instructions from al-Qaida operatives in Yemen.

Brennan is leading a White House review of the incident. Obama has said there was a systemic failure to prevent the attack, which he said was instigated by an affiliate in Yemen of the al-Qaida terrorist network.

Obama ordered a thorough look at the shortcomings that permitted the plot, which failed not because of U.S. actions but because the would-be attacker failed to set off a deadly detonation. The president has summoned homeland security officials to meet with him in the White House Situation Room on Tuesday.

Ohio native, ex-Navy Seal killed in Afghan bombing

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP)—A former Navy Seal and an Ohio native whose wife is expecting the couple's first child were among seven people killed in a suicide bombing attack targeting a CIA base in southeastern Afghanistan last week.

Scott Michael Roberson, 39, was working as a security officer for the CIA when the blast on Dec. 30 rocked the remote outpost in Khost province, said his sister, Amy Messner of Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio.

The government notified his wife Wednesday of his death, Messner said, and the CIA has allowed them to make his death public.

Before joining the CIA, Roberson had worked undercover in narcotics for the Atlanta police. He also served with United Nations security forces in Kosovo and did several tours of duty in Iraq, where he provided protection to high-risk officials.

AP

In this undated photo provided by Amy Messner, Scott Michael Roberson is seen.

"He always said that if something happened to him, he would have no regrets," his sister said. "He was so proud of what he was doing."

Roberson had hoped to return to the U.S. for the birth of his first child in February, his sister said.

"As hard as all of this is, at least we are able to let the world know what an amazing person Scott was," Messner said. "I can't imagine how hard it would be for those families to not be able to share that."

Roberson is survived by his wife, Molly, of Knoxville, Tenn.; his parents and sister. A memorial service is planned for Saturday in Akron, Ohio.

Advocate uses texting to warn of AZ crime sweeps

PHOENIX (AP)—An advocate for immigrant and civil rights has started using text messages to warn residents about crime sweeps by a high-profile Arizona sheriff.

Lydia Guzman, director of the nonprofit immigrant advocacy group Respect/Respeto, is the trunk of a sophisticated texting tree designed to alert thousands of people within minutes to the details of the sweeps, which critics contend are an excuse to round up illegal immigrants.

Guzman said the messages are part of an effort to protect Latinos and others from becoming victims of racial profiling by sheriff's deputies. Deputies have been accused of stopping Hispanics, including citizens and legal immigrants, for minor traffic violations to check their immigration status.

"Everyone is responsible for sending it out to their own networks, and that is how it spreads like wildfire," Guzman said of the text messages.

Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio has repeatedly said his deputies do not engage in racial profiling, and he publicizes the details of his crime sweeps ahead of time. He said he suspects the real goal of the text messages is to help illegal immigrants avoid arrest.

"This little group of people is (in favor of) open borders, and they don't like what I am doing. That is the bottom line," Arpaio said. "But it isn't interfering with our operations because every time we do it, we still arrest a good number of people, including illegal aliens."

ACROSS THE NATION

NYC-funded handout called how-to for heroin users

NEW YORK (AP)—A New York City-funded guidebook for heroin users offers information on how to prepare drugs carefully and care for veins to avoid infection. The state's top official with the Drug Enforcement Administration calls the "Take Charge Take Care" guide a "step-by-step instruction on how to inject a poison." DEA special agent-in-charge John Gilbride says the handout is disturbing. The city's Department of Health and Mental Hygiene printed about 70,000 copies. A health official says the goal is to promote health and save lives. Assistant Commissioner Daliah Heller says instructions on how to perform injections were included because there's "a less harmful way to inject." The illustrated guidebook offers information on HIV testing and the dangers of sharing needles.

Man killed when SUV plows into Calif. restaurant

EL CAJON, Calif. (AP)—Authorities say a 66-year-old man eating breakfast at a California fast-food restaurant was killed when a vehicle plowed through the corner of the building. El Cajon Police Lt. Jeff Davis says the man was sitting in a front corner booth at a Carl's Jr. in San Diego County on Sunday morning when a Honda CRV slammed into the restaurant. The 74-year-old driver, a resident of El Cajon, was taken to a hospital with moderate injuries. The cause of the crash is under investigation. A witness told officers it appeared the SUV was going 45 to 50 mph. The restaurant is closed as officials determine the structural integrity of the building.

Friends of missing Utah mom launch Web media blitz

WEST VALLEY CITY, Utah (AP)—Friends and family of Susan Powell are launching a social media blitz in the search for the missing Utah mother of two. James Hofheins, one of the organizers, says the three-day effort beginning Monday will use Facebook, Twitter and YouTube to information about Powell and her picture throughout the Internet. He says there will also be a purple ribbon campaign and Facebook users are being asked to change their profile pictures to a purple ribbon. Powell has been missing since Dec. 7. Police have labeled her husband Josh Powell as a person of interest. He has told police he went camping with the Powells' two young boys around the time she went missing.

Asia

Japan leader wants more equal ties with US

TOKYO (AP)—Japan's prime minister said Monday he will press for more equal ties with Washington this year, the 50th anniversary of a joint security treaty that grants many special privileges to U.S. troops stationed in the country.

Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama, in a New Year's speech shown live on national television, said he hopes the alliance will evolve to become more open and candid.

It is important "for both sides to be able to firmly say what needs to be said, and to increase the relationship of trust," he said.

Under a security pact signed in 1960, U.S. armed forces are allowed broad use of Japanese land and facilities, and currently some 47,000 American troops are stationed in Japan. The U.S. is obliged to respond to attacks on Japan and protects the country under its nuclear umbrella.

More than half those troops are stationed in the southern island of Okinawa, where many residents complain about noise, pollution and crime linked to the bases.

AP

Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama speaks during his first press conference of the year at the premier's official residence in Tokyo, Monday, Jan. 4, 2010.

U.S.-Japan ties have become strained since Hatoyama took office in September over the relocation of Futenma U.S. Marine airfield on Okinawa, as part of a broader reorganization agreed in 2006. The plan calls for 8,000 Marines to be transferred to the U.S. territory of Guam and for Futenma's facilities to be moved to a northern part of Okinawa.

But residents oppose the move and simply want Futenma shut down. Hatoyama has delayed making a final decision and said he's willing to consider other options for the base. The leader of a junior coalition partner has said she wants the base moved off Japanese territory altogether.

In Monday's speech, the prime minister said the Japan-U.S. partnership also needs to tackle broader issues such as global warming.

"It doesn't even need to be said that the core of the Japan-U.S. alliance is military security. But it is important to show that at various levels, Japan and America are in a crucial relationship," he said.

Domestically, Hatoyama said his main priority was passing a new budget and fiscal measures to keep Japan's nascent economic recovery on track.

He said it was too soon to elaborate on his party's strategy for elections for the less powerful upper house of parliament coming up this summer. Recent polls have shown his popularity has fallen sharply since his party swept to power last year.

WORLD BRIEFS

Tajikistan earthquake leaves 20,000 homeless

DUSHANBE, Tajikistan (AP)—About 20,000 people were left homeless in the impoverished Central Asian nation of Tajikistan after an earthquake leveled their homes in a mountainous region, officials said Sunday. No deaths were reported after the magnitude 5.3 quake struck the Pamir Mountains on Saturday, the Emergency Situations and Civil Defense Committee said. Hundreds of mud-brick houses in several villages in the Gorno-Badakhshansky region were damaged. The quake also cut electricity and communications and blocked the main road between the regional center of Vanch and nearby villages.

Cold spell kills dozens of homeless in north India

NEW DELHI (AP)—More than 30 people have died in cold weather-related incidents in northern India in the past 24 hours, including 10 people killed in train accidents caused by dense fog, police said Sunday. A cold snap left at least two dozen homeless people dead in Uttar Pradesh state since Saturday, taking the death toll from exposure in the region to 40 over the last week, police spokesman Surendra Srivastava said. Last winter the state reported 151 cold-related deaths. Authorities began distributing blankets and firewood to the homeless last week. The cold caused dense fog that also led to two separate train collisions that killed 10 people and injured 47 others Saturday in Uttar Pradesh, police said.

Americans to appear in Pakistan court

SARGODHA, Pakistan (AP)—Five Americans suspected of plotting attacks in Pakistan are due to appear in an anti-terrorism court Monday. Police have said they will seek life sentences on terror charges against the five young Muslim men, who are from the Washington D.C. area. The five were arrested in the eastern Pakistan city of Sargodha in early December in a case that has spurred fears that Westerners are traveling to Pakistan to join militant groups. Under Pakistan's complicated judicial system, police will recommend charges during the court appearance. However, the court might not charge the men immediately, and the five will likely be given time to prepare their defense.

Roadside bombs kill 6 in Pakistan's northwest

PARACHINAR, Pakistan (AP)—Roadside bombs struck two vehicles in Pakistan's volatile northwest Sunday, killing a former irrigation minister and three others in one attack and two anti-Taliban tribal elders in the other.

Public officials and private citizens combatting the growing Taliban-led insurgency in Pakistan have been frequent targets in a wave of violence that has killed more than 600 people in the past two-and-a-half months.

A single attack two days ago killed nearly 100 people when a suicide car bomber struck a sports event near a meeting of tribesmen who supervise an anti-Taliban militia near Pakistan's South Waziristan tribal area.

The Pakistani army invaded South Waziristan in mid-October in an attempt to neutralize the Pakistani Taliban's main stronghold in the country, but many militants fled the offensive and have been launching attacks elsewhere in the northwest.

The Pakistani government has pledged it will persevere despite the violence but has resisted U.S. calls to expand its offensive to target militants launching cross-border attacks against coalition troops in Afghanistan.

The U.S. has responded by increasing drone missile strikes in Pakistan's tribal areas, including a suspected attack Sunday in North Waziristan that killed at least five people, according to intelligence officials.

Hours earlier, a roadside bomb struck a vehicle in the Hangu district of North West Frontier Province, killing former Irrigation Minister Ghaniur Rehman, his two guards and his driver, said district police chief Abdur Rasheed. Two police officers accompanying the former minister were wounded in the attack, he said.

Rehman was affiliated with the Pakistan People's Party (Sherpao group) headed by former Interior Minister Aftab Khan Sherpao, who has survived two suicide bomb attacks.

The attack came after a roadside bomb struck a vehicle carrying anti-Taliban elders in the Bajur tribal area, killing two and critically wounding four others, said local official Naseeb Shah. The six men were working to set up an anti-Taliban militia in Bajur, a militant stronghold near the Afghan border, said Shah.

The men were on their way to meet local officials in the main town of Khar when the remote-controlled device detonated, Shah said. The blast occurred near Kassai, about 17 miles (28 kilometers) northeast of Khar, he said.

The Pakistani military carried out an anti-Taliban offensive in Bajur in 2008 and 2009 that it declared a success. But the militants have maintained their presence, and violence has flared in the region since then.

The bullet-riddled bodies of a man and a woman were found in the Mamund area of Bajur on Sunday with a note saying they were guilty of violating Islamic law, local official Faromosh Khan said.

Militants have stepped up attacks in other parts of the northwest as well in apparent retaliation for the recent South Waziristan offensive.

The suicide car bombing in the northwest village of Shah Hasan Khel near South Waziristan that killed 96 people on New Year's Day was one of the deadliest attacks since the army launched the operation.

Myanmar chief confirms elections to be held 2010

YANGON, Myanmar (AP)—Myanmar's ruling junta chief confirmed Monday that the country's first general elections in two decades will be held this year but gave no date for the balloting, expected to exclude pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

In a message marking the anniversary of Myanmar's 1948 independence from Britain, Senior Gen. Than Shwe said that the regime's seven-step roadmap is the only way for the country to move toward democracy.

"Plans are under way to hold the elections in a systematic way this year and the entire people have to make correct choices," Than Shwe said in a message printed in state-run newspapers. The message did not clarify what was meant by "correct choices" but was widely assumed to urge voters to support military-backed political parties.

The roadmap is the junta's program for shifting from nearly 50 years of military rule. A key step in that process was a constitution adopted in a 2008 referendum widely criticized as authoritarian. The constitution guarantees a quarter of parliamentary seats for the military.

The final step in the roadmap is the elections. Critics say the process will merely perpetuate military rule under a civilian guise. Suu Kyi, who recently had her house arrest extended by 18 months, will be unable to participate in the balloting.

The junta has yet to pass necessary elections laws for the 2010 vote or set a date.

Myanmar gained independence from Britain on Jan. 4, 1948, after more than 120 years of colonial rule. It has been under harsh military rule since 1962. The current junta emerged in 1988 after violently suppressing mass pro-democracy protests. It held a general election in 1990, but refused to recognize the results after a landslide victory by Suu Kyi's party.

Her National League for Democracy is to mark Independence Day at party headquarters Monday.

The United States congratulated the people of Myanmar, also known as Burma, on the 62nd anniversary of its independence, and said it looked forward to the day when they could "exercise freely their universal human rights."

Angry minority finds a voice on Chinese campus

BEIJING (AP)—Young men climb a railing at the back for a better view, while a woman in a Muslim head scarf snaps photos on her cell phone.

Every Friday afternoon, students pack a college classroom in Beijing to catch a glimpse of the sharply dressed professor punching the air as he speaks with surprising candor about the travails of his ethnic group, the Uighurs.

"We are not descendants of the dragon but of the wolf," Ilham Tohti shouts, drawing a clear line between the creation myths of the Han Chinese and the Uighur minority. "We were not created by the Chinese Communist Party. Our history stretches back much longer than 60 years."

The weekly lectures are a kind of high-wire act for the 40-year-old economist from Xinjiang, a predominantly Muslim region in China's far west. He has been put under house arrest dozens of times over the past decade for criticizing how China runs his homeland and treats his people.

The fearlessness so admired by his students, a Chinese ethnic mosaic of Hans, Uighurs, Kazakhs and others, is exactly what the government fears.

Yet Tohti is not a separatist or even a political dissident. He's a Communist Party member and a teacher at a top Chinese university who sees himself as a bridge between Hans and Uighurs.

World

UK knew US airline suspect had extremist ties

LONDON (AP)—British intelligence officials knew that the Nigerian man suspected of trying to bomb a Detroit-bound airliner had ties to U.K. extremists but did not consider him enough of a high risk to alert American authorities, a senior British official said Sunday.

Officials realized about a year after Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab came to London to study in 2005 that he was in contact with Islamic extremists whose communications were being monitored, a senior government official told The Associated Press on Sunday.

But there were no signs that Abdulmutallab wanted to target the United States or was considering turning toward violence, the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of his work.

"It was clear he was reaching out to radical extremists in the U.K. but there was nothing to indicate he was violent," the official said. "There is a very large number of people in the U.K. who express interest in radical extremism but never turn to violence. He only pinged up on our radar because of other people we were interested in."

Officials say Abdulmutallab, a 23-year-old Nigerian who spent time in Yemen, sneaked an explosive device aboard his Northwest Airlines flight from Amsterdam to Detroit on Christmas Day but was not able to ignite it as planned.

This image made available by IntelCenter and taken from a Web site frequently used by militants to disseminate their messages, purports to show Nigerian Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab.

AP

US, UK *close Yemen embassies over al-Qaida threats*

SAN'A, Yemen (AP)—Western embassies in Yemen locked up Sunday after fresh threats from al-Qaida, and the White House expressed alarm at the terror group's expanded reach in the poor Arab nation where an offshoot apparently ordered the Christmas Day plot against a U.S. airliner.

President Barack Obama's top counterterrorism adviser, John Brennan, cited "indications al-Qaida is planning to carry out an attack against a target" in the capital, possibly the embassy, and estimated the group had several hundred members in Yemen. Security reasons led Britain to act, too; it was not known when the embassies would reopen.

The U.S. is worried about the spread of terrorism in Yemen, a U.S. ally and aid recipient, Brennan said, but doesn't consider the country a second front with Afghanistan and Pakistan in the fight against terrorism.

As to whether U.S. troops might be sent to Yemen, Brennan replied: "We're not talking about that at this point at all." He pledged to provide the Yemeni government with "the wherewithal" to take down al-Qaida.

Britain and the United States are assisting a counterterrorism police unit in Yemen as fears grow about the increasing threat of international terrorism originating from the country.

President Barack Obama has said there was a systemic failure to prevent the attack and ordered a thorough review of security shortcomings. The president has summoned Homeland Security officials to meet with him in the White House on Tuesday.

The British official said even though there are no set profile characteristics to indicate whether a suspect is likely to turn violent, the overall risk a person poses can be assessed by looking their associates, travel patterns, threats and activities.

He declined to name the extremists that Abdulmutallab had contacted.

"Obviously if there was any indication that he was likely to target the U.S., we would have immediately alerted our U.S. counterparts," the officials told The Associated Press in an interview. "But the fact is that many start on this journey of extremism and few complete it."

He said it wouldn't make sense to alert US authorities to every person who showed up on the "fringes of extremism" and said Abdulmutallab's actual radicalization appeared to have come in the time he spent in Yemen.

It is believed Abdulmutallab received training in Yemen five months before the failed attack.

A U.S. intelligence official said American counterterrorism officials are looking into what knowledge allies may have had about Abdulmutallab. He spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to publicly discuss foreign intelligence.

The disclosure came as Prime Minister Gordon Brown announced that full body scanners would be introduced in British airports and that the U.K. would dedicate funding for an anti-terror police unit in Yemen.

Brown told the British Broadcasting Corp. on Sunday that all airport security would be increased, and that all passengers including those only transiting through Britain would have their hand luggage screened for explosives.

Saudi-Iran frictions at graves revered by Shiites

MEDINA, Saudi Arabia (AP)—At the cemetery where the Prophet Muhammad's family is buried, an Iranian Shiite Muslim pilgrim overcome with emotion was jerked by a Saudi soldier, who barked a sharp order: "Stop crying!"

The soldier, a gun at his hip, then hovered over the pilgrim as he wrapped up his prayers to make sure he didn't start weeping again.

The Baqee cemetery is where the bitter rivalry between Sunni powerhouse Saudi Arabia and Shiite Iran gets personal. Iranians and other Shiites flock to the graves to pay respects to several revered descendants of Islam's prophet, while Saudi soldiers and morality police try to prevent dramatic displays of fervent praying or weeping.

Shiites' prayer books are snatched away, they are ordered to read only Saudi-approved verses written on billboards at the site, and groups of worshippers are broken up.

Part of the reason for the heavy restrictions is religious. Saudi Arabia's strict version of Sunni Islam, called Wahhabism, considers customs like crying—or even praying—at gravesites and revering saints repugnant because it smacks of idolatry. In fact, many Wahhabi clerics consider Shiites heretics.

But beyond the religious practices lies politics.

The two countries have been locked in a struggle for influence across the Middle East. Saudi forces have been fighting for more than a month with Shiite rebels on the border with Yemen who it claims are backed by Tehran. The kingdom accuses Iran of fueling conflicts in Lebanon, the Palestinian territories and Iraq with its support for militant groups.

Saudi Arabia, an oil-rich U.S. ally, also appears increasingly worried over Iran's nuclear standoff with the West. Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal expressed rare direct concern over Iran's nuclear program in a recent interview with Western media—prompting angry comments by some Iranian officials for the kingdom to stay out of its business.

Hamas inmates say torture ends in West Bank jails

NABLUS, West Bank (AP)—Palestinian security forces in the West Bank have stopped torturing Hamas prisoners, ending two years of systematic abuse, Hamas inmates told The Associated Press in jailhouse interviews.

The change in practice, said to have taken effect in October, was confirmed by a West Bank Hamas leader, human rights activists and the Palestinian prime minister. It defuses a potential problem for Washington since the U.S. has been closely involved in training Palestinian troops under the control of Western-backed President Mahmoud Abbas, a rival of the Hamas militants.

Human rights groups say their public pressure campaign helped bring about change, and President Barack Obama's no-torture policy might have helped set a new tone. However, Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad said the decision to halt any abuse was an independent one, part of an effort to make sure a future state is built on the right foundations.

Hamas legislators and human rights researchers said they still get sporadic reports of prisoners being slapped or forced to stand for several hours during interrogation. And security forces continue to keep a close watch on Hamas activities, often arresting activists and holding them for lengthy periods without charge.

However, they said the worst behavior—prisoners beaten with clubs and cables, suspended from the ceiling while tied up in painful positions and forced to stand for days—has ended.

Fayyad confirmed a "dramatic change for the better" in West Bank prisons and said 43 officers have been jailed, fired or demoted for abusing prisoners.

In an interview, he denied torture was ever official policy, but acknowledged past "excesses" that he said stemmed from a flawed culture of revenge.

WORLD BRIEFS

Mexico nabs 3rd brother in reputed drug family

MEXICO CITY (AP)—The capture of a reputed kingpin following the death of his brother has knocked out most of a brutal drug trafficking dynasty after a Mexican crackdown on corruption stripped the Beltran Leyva cartel of many snitches within security forces. Carlos Beltran Leyva was arrested in the Pacific coast state Sinaloa, where he and several of his brothers were born and allegedly started their gang. A judge ordered him held for at least 40 days while officials investigate possible charges of organized crime, the Attorney General's Office said in a statement Sunday. His capture came just two weeks after his brother Arturo, known as "the boss of bosses" of the cartel, was killed in a shootout with marines at a luxury apartment in the city of Cuernavaca.

Iranian journalist gets prison term, desert exile

TEHRAN, Iran (AP)—An Iranian journalist lost an appeal Sunday against his conviction on charges of spreading propaganda against the ruling Islamic establishment and was sentenced to six years in prison and five years of internal exile in a remote desert town. The court also confirmed a lifelong ban on political activity for the prominent reporter, Ahmad Zeidabadi, who was also once a student activist. Zeidabadi was among more than 100 political figures and activists tried together in the aftermath of Iran's disputed presidential election, which the opposition says was rigged to give Mahmoud Ahmadinejad another term in office.

Reports: Cartoonist attacker earlier held in Kenya

STOCKHOLM (AP)—The Somali man who attacked an artist who depicted the Prophet Muhammad in a controversial cartoon has previously been arrested in Kenya, Danish media reported Sunday. The Danish intelligence agency PET knew that the 28-year-old Somali man was held in Kenya in September for allegedly participating in plotting an attack against U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, the Politiken newspaper reported Sunday. Citing unnamed sources, it said he was later released due to lack of evidence.

Clinton visited Kenya as part of an 11-day-tour of Africa in August. Denmark's ambassador to Kenya, Bo Jensen, told the news agency Ritzau that the Somali man was arrested in Kenya at the time for having incomplete travel documents. However, he said Kenyan authorities never told the embassy he was suspected in any terror plot and that the newspaper misunderstood the situation.

Overdrive

Suzuki Sportback wowed in East Coast blizzard

SUZUKI

The 2010 Suzuki SX4 Sportback, a little wagon with lots of heart, made a friend of the reviewer with its stellar performance and handling during the recent East Coast blizzard.

By WARREN BROWN
SPECIAL TO THE WASHINGTON POST

WASHINGTON—This week's column was to feature the 2010 Hyundai Tucson, a vastly improved compact crossover utility vehicle driven earlier in December in California. But it was upstaged by a blizzard and an unlikely hero back home in suburban Virginia: Meet the 2010 Suzuki SX4 Sportback, a little wagon with lots of heart.

I'll say up front that I was disappointed to find the SX4 Sportback in my driveway after returning from California. I drove its sibling SX4 Sport sedan last year and was not impressed. It was a cheap-feel economy car masquerading as a sexy performance automobile—more hype than reality and no match for comparable Ford Focus, Honda Civic or Toyota Corolla models in the real world.

But that was the 2008 SX4 Sport sedan.

The 2010 SX4 Sportback wagon is something else. It competes well with everything in its class.

Fit and finish in the 2010 wagon are discernibly superior to what I experienced in the 2008 sedan. There is much less engine noise and vibration, although there is more engine horsepower (150 now vs. 143 then) and more torque (140 foot-pounds vs. 136).

Suzuki has long offered more amenities than expected in an economy car, such as onboard navigation with real-time traffic and weather information, which also are found in the new SX4 Sportback wagon. But in this iteration, it all seems to make more sense.

My wife, Mary Anne, thinks I have a more favorable opinion of the SX4 Sportback because it did something I never thought it could or would do: It performed beautifully in last weekend's East Coast blizzard. She may be right.

I panicked when snow started falling late that Friday night. I worried about nasty, slippery, side streets quickly accumulating snow. With chagrin I considered the car—a compact, front-wheel-drive wagon, 150-horsepower four-cylinder engine, six-speed manual transmission, four-wheel disc brakes, 17-inch diameter wheels shod with "all season" radial tires. Great for dry weather, I thought. But I figured it would get trumped by the snow.

I was wrong. The car maintained its footing on wet, icy roads, never once hinting at skidding or swerving out of control. On several side streets where snow was accumulating quickly, the SX4 Sportback displayed remarkable stability over what was fast becoming bumpy, lumpy compacted road ice.

Before that driving experience, I thought the car's independent front suspension and torsion beam rear suspension represented workaday, traditional chassis engineering. But maybe it's not the type of components chosen as it is the integrity of the pieces and the quality with which they are joined together. The SX4 Sportback's front tires gripped through the mush. Electronic stability and traction control, standard on the wagon, worked perfectly helping to compensate for my steering errors. I was gobsmacked.

I parked the car as Friday night slid into Saturday morning and watched the little Suzuki disappear under the onslaught of snow. By snow's end Saturday night, there was only a lump in the landscape to mark its earthly existence.

Mary Anne and I dug it out Sunday and I fired it up. It didn't miss a beat—starting right away and traversing still-snowy streets as if it were a four-wheel-drive sport-utility vehicle.

NUTS & BOLTS

THE BOTTOM LINE

Here's suggesting that Suzuki drop the pocket-rocket marketing hype and emphasize the SX4 Sportback's solid, real-world virtues. It is one of the best, most gutsy, most affordable urban wagons available.

COMPLAINT

Perhaps I'm greedy, but I think a small four-cylinder wagon with a factory weight of 2,732 pounds should get better than 22 miles per gallon in the city and 30 miles per gallon on the highway. More-efficient diesel technology would raise the cost of this one and threaten its "economy car" status. But it would add greatly to its value.

HEAD-TURNING QUOTIENT

It's a happy marriage between ugly and cute. Think of it as a Zhu Zhu pet with horsepower and steering wheel.

RIDE, ACCELERATION AND HANDLING

Ride is all-around comfortable. Acceleration is decent. Handling proved remarkable, especially in inclement winter weather.

BODY STYLE/LAYOUT

The 2010 SX4 Sportback is a compact, front-engine, front-wheel-drive wagon with four side doors and a rear hatch.

ENGINE/ TRANSMISSIONS

A standard 2-liter, inline four-cylinder engine serves the Sportback wagon and Sport sedan. The engine develops 150 horsepower at 6,200 rpm and 140 foot-pounds of torque at 3,500 rpm. Six-speed manual transmission is standard. A continuously variable automatic transmission—one in which there are no specific gear gates—is optional.

CAPACITIES

There are seats for five people. Maximum cargo space is 54 cubic feet. The fuel tank holds 13.2 gallons of regular gasoline.

MILEAGE

Twenty-two miles per gallon in the city and 30 on the highway does not impress hyper-mileage motorists.

SAFETY

Standard equipment includes four-wheel disc brakes (ventilated front/solid rear) with antilock brake protection; electronic brake force distribution to assist in panic stops; electronic stability and traction control; and side and head air bags.

PRICE

The 2010 Suzuki SX4 Sportback wagon starts at $17,949. Dealer's invoice price on that model is $17,231. Price as tested is $18,984, including $300 in options (front and rear floor mats and cargo net) and a $735 destination charge. Dealer's price as tested is $18,254. Current buyer incentive money is at $1,250. Prices are sourced from Suzuki, Edmunds.com and Cars.com, an affiliate of The Washington Post.

Luxury car buyers are spending less

DAN STRUMPF and BY TOM KRISHER
AP AUTO WRITERS

DETROIT (AP)—Wealthier Americans are trickling back into showrooms after staying away much of the year. But there is a catch. Many are pinching pennies, sort of, by choosing smaller BMW and Mercedes models, or they are buying top-of-the-line cars from cheaper brands.

This year, almost 14 percent of luxury buyers replaced old vehicles with brands other than traditional high-end names such as Audi, BMW, Cadillac, Infiniti, Jaguar, Lexus, Lincoln, Mercedes and Porsche. That's up from just 4 percent in 2006 and a reminder that these buyers still don't feel as wealthy as they once did. Home values are still down and portfolios shrunken, despite the stock market's gains this year.

Two potential beneficiaries of the shift are Buick and Hyundai, brands offering luxury models that are much cheaper than Beamers and Audis.

AP

Buick LaCrosse models are shown at Hilltop Buick Pontiac GMC in Richmond, Calif., Wednesday, Dec. 23, 2009.

Buick for years was known for cushy, boring sedans normally found outside grandma's house. The average Buick buyer is still about 70 years old, and the brand is desperately trying to attract younger drivers and reverse a sales slide, says Aaron Bragman, an auto industry analyst with Global Insight in Troy, Michigan.

This may be its opportunity.

After years of ho-hum styling, blase interiors and soft suspensions that made driving a chore, Buick's new LaCrosse luxury sedan is far sportier than its predecessor. It's got crisper handling and sleeker styling designed to appeal to people in their 40s and 50s. It also includes on-board hard drives and other electronic gizmos for younger drivers, all while costing $5,000 to $20,000 less than European and Japanese luxury competitors.

At $27,000, Buick's German-designed LaCrosse performs as well as its more expensive competitors, yet has everything luxury buyers are seeking, Bragman says.

That's important because luxury shoppers are picky, even when they economize. While many are now willing to give up a prestigious name or a bigger car, they still want cutting-edge styling along with reliability and safely. They demand tight handling and a quiet ride. The car must have excellent fit-and-finish inside and out and features such as heated leather seats and navigation systems.

Life & Style

The bells of Kiev:
Ukraine's capital is cradle of Russian culture

TREY RATCLIFF/WWW.STUCKINCUSTOMS.COM

From Independence Square, most things in Kiev are no more than 20 minutes away.

By JOHN PANCAKE
SPECIAL TO THE WASHINGTON POST

Some cities are love at first sight. People fall for Paris in the taxi from the airport.

Others take you slowly. Kiev is like that.

I've walked the streets of this Ukrainian capital almost every day for a year. I've watched white-tailed eagles on a vast swampy island in the middle of the Dnieper River, listened as unseen nuns filled a vaulted church with their harmonies, marveled at the parade of tall women in stilettos clicking confidently down icy sidewalks and suffered a mild concussion myself when my feet shot out from under me in a frozen alley.

I've passed markers commemorating millions of murders. I've negotiated for a baggie of turmeric with a man from Samarkand. I've lost my bearings in candlelit catacombs, felt the sting of the winter wind on the city's high bluffs, watched twilight envelop golden-domed churches and talked to the genius behind the city's strangest museum. (And I'm not talking about the toilet museum, either.)

I've discovered wooden windmills, taxi-driver poets, gilded icons, robed monks, blues singers, cheap river cruises, horseradish vodka and a few new things about myself. Perhaps the only thing I haven't encountered in Kiev is a dull day. It is an unsung capital, full of surprises. During the day, you may be startled by the sudden cascade of sound that tumbles out of churches on religious holidays—the "raspberry bells," it's called. By night, you may flinch at the concussion of the boisterous fireworks that Ukrainians send arcing over the city four or five nights a month.

Sixteen months ago, I walked away from my desk at *The Washington Post.* Shortly afterward, my wife landed an 18-month job in Ukraine.

We arrived on a fall day as the sun was setting and had our first meal at Oscar's Place, a three-table restaurant on the street where we'd be living. My wife, who speaks Russian, told the barmaid that it was my first night in Ukraine. Don't order, she replied. I'll bring you real Ukrainian food. She did. And it was great, though the first dish—salo, slices of raw pork fat served on black bread—is best if washed down with vodka.

Since then, I've been spending the afternoons writing and exploring the city and the mornings studying Russian. (Almost everybody in Kiev speaks both Russian and Ukrainian. I picked Russian because I've always dreamed of reading Chekhov in his native tongue.)

TREY RATCLIFF/WWW.STUCKINCUSTOMS.COM

St. Michael's Monastery of the Golden Domes is a recent reconstruction of an old church in Kiev, Ukraine.

I began with a seven-word vocabulary: Yes, no, please, thank you, hello, goodbye and beer ("peevo"). That was enough to get started. People I met were happy to communicate. Gestures and pantomime worked wonders when words failed. I doubt this would work with the French.

To my chagrin, I found that people sometimes addressed me in English before I opened my mouth. Was it my clothes? No, I was usually wearing black jeans and pullover, like every other man in town. Shoes? My low black boots were exactly what many Ukrainians had on. Finally I asked. Turned out, it was my face. Most people here have better cheekbones than Tom Cruise. I don't.

■ ■ ■ ■

Kiev is an old city, one of the cradles of Russian culture. The Russians, in fact, call it the mother of cities. Legend has it that in A.D. 560, three Viking brothers rowed down the Dnieper with their sister at the steering oar. She picked the spot where they settled and named it for the eldest brother, Kyi. Sounds like she was in charge.

Although Kiev is spread out along both sides of the Dnieper, I generally walk the oldest sections, which are scattered along the hills of the west bank. The golden domes of churches, monasteries and bell towers adorn the ridge above the river, as if some giant had dropped a handful of Christmas decorations. The center of Kiev remains a remarkably intimate place for a big city (2.7 million). Not many high rises. Lots of quirky streets and eccentric apartment buildings festooned with sculptural reliefs—lions here, gods and goddesses there, laurel wreaths above the windows. There's a concrete rhino poking out of one building. And in some sections, the facades are frosted with a layer of ceramic tile.

If you squint past the drab Soviet architecture that mars some of the city, you can see enormous beauty. But there is sadness in it.

Everywhere, you sense layers of tragedy and rebirth. The churches of Kiev make the point. Near our flat, you can find the remains of a church destroyed by invaders in the 13th century. A few hundred yards away, on the same hill-

See BELLS on next page

BELLS

From Page 18

top, stands St. Michael's Monastery of the Golden Domes, home to my favorite bells. A church has been on that spot for more than 900 years, but today's lovely cerulean building is a recent reconstruction of an old church that communists blew up in the 1930s.

The nearby streets include ornate pre-Soviet facades and a few cold examples of Stalinist gigantism. You meet many self-congratulatory statues but scads of modest, carefully sculpted portraits, too. They're easy to miss. Most jut just above eye level from the sides of old apartment buildings. Each shows a distinguished painter or agronomist or writer or ballet master ... who had an apartment in the building the memorial is bolted to. As you walk along, you think of the aging physicist skittering across a frozen curb here or the lovely actress memorizing lines from "Uncle Vanya" on a park bench just there.

GENE THORP/THE WASHINGTON POST

THE WASHINGTON POST/GENE THORP

Ukraine's capital, Kiev, has rich, beautiful, sad stories for those who stop to listen.

Near our flat, I found a small stone sculpture of the silhouette of a child inside the outline of a robed woman, perhaps an angel. It commemorates the Great Famine of 1932-33. Unlike most famines, this one was man-made. Ultimately, the man who made it was Stalin. He demanded impossible amounts of grain for export. Desperate to comply, local bosses kept supplies of grain locked in warehouses while Ukrainians starved. Estimates of the death toll range from 2.5 million to nearly 10 million. It was mostly ignored in the West.

Children suffered terribly. Some people survived by eating corpses. Standing in the wind in front of the memorial and feeling very small, I tried to grasp the enormity of it.

The worst of the famine was not here in Kiev, but in villages. But walking down the city's lovely old streets, passing people whose families almost all endured the famine, you can't help admiring the grit and grace of Ukrainians.

Ukrainians don't get a lot of respect from Westerners. Theirs is the largest country in Europe, save for the European part of Russia. Ukraine was part of the Russian empire and then a republic within the Soviet Union. It became independent in 1991. A pro-Western government took over after the peaceful protests of the "Orange Revolution" of 2004. But a lot of Americans think it is still part of Russia. Someone in the United States sent a letter to a friend here addressed to "Kiev, Russia." It arrived.

■ ■ ■ ■

A beautiful string of parks stretches along the hills above the river. It's probably the best walk in the city. Eventually, you reach the high-walled Kiev-Pechersk Lavra. Once one of the most important centers of Orthodox Christianity and home to 1,000 monks, it was taken over by the Soviet government in 1930. Religious activities resumed over time. Today, some buildings are secular cultural museums and some are part of a religious complex operated by the Orthodox Church.

Beneath several of the churches is a labyrinth of tunnels, used by reclusive monks in times gone by and now the resting place for many saints. Carved into the 660 yards of stone tunnels are a number of tiny, elegant churches fitted with glittering gold icons. Parts of the cave complex are open to the public. Lighting a candle and walking through the cramped, whitewashed passages is both strange and moving. Along with tourists, devout worshipers come here to kneel and pray next to the small, glass-topped coffins.

Part of the Lavra encompasses the secular exhibitions—which run the gamut from displays of ornamental gold fashioned by the mysterious Scythian peoples who once ruled the Ukrainian steppe to the marvelously quirky Museum of Micro-Miniatures.

The latter grew out of the imagination of one man, Mykola Syadristy, who set out to make items so tiny they could be appreciated only when viewed through microscopes. My favorite consists of a human hair, drilled hollow and then polished to transparency. Inside this tiny tube, Syadristy managed to insert a miniature rose.

Now 72, Syadristy often hangs around the museum. One afternoon, my friend Karen, who speaks fluent Russian, and I struck up a conversation with him. We thought he would regale us with stories of his secret techniques—how he made the minuscule maiden with an umbrella who sits on the proboscis of a life-size golden mosquito, or how he placed an entire desert caravan inside the eye of a needle.

Our initial question produced an uninterruptible 15-minute oration, but it wasn't about how he put a chess set on the head of a pin. It was about Marx, Engels, Lenin and the shortcomings of Ukraine's current leadership.

The more you talk to Ukrainians, the more you realize that for all their toughness, their hearts have been broken by politicians.

President Viktor Yushchenko, who led the Orange Revolution, seemed poised to become the country's George Washington. But in the run-up to this winter's election, his approval rating is only 2 to 3 percent, making him perhaps the world's most unpopular elected leader. Part of the reason is that the financial crisis that shook the United States has been catastrophic here. Unemployment is up. People who have been sacked can't get at their savings because banks are in trouble.

But you can walk the streets and still see plenty of shiny cars threading their way around the rattling Russian-designed Ladas. On the sidewalks march Ukrainian women in glittering shoes and fur-trimmed leather jackets. On the outskirts, marshy fields erupt with hulking McMansions.

It's as if Ukraine is somehow sure that its encounter with misfortune will have a storybook ending, an attitude captured in the local saying: If Khevrya hadn't fallen into the puddle, she wouldn't have gotten married. Although no handsome stranger has pulled Kiev out of the mud lately, people here have a profound understanding of misfortune.

The reality of that hits home as you walk south from the old monastic citadel. The city falls away on either side and the view is dominated by Kiev's perhaps most dramatic landmark: Rodina Mat, the mother of the country.

She is tall, she is titanium, she has a 53-ton sword, she is not particularly happy.

TREY RATCLIFF/WWW.STUCKINCUSTOMS.COM

The snowy rooftops of old and new homes in Kiev, Ukraine.

ULANA SWITUCHA

A bronze bell at Kiev-Pechersk Lavra, once a center of Orthodox Christianity in Kiev, Ukraine.

The statue stands atop a museum dedicated to World War II's Eastern Front, and the story inside the museum is more than sobering. Moving through the museum, I often wonder why I knew so little of it until now.

In history courses, I got the standard American account of the war: Blitzkrieg, Dunkirk, Battle of Britain, Churchill with a defiant cigar, D-Day, pretty girls showering GIs with flowers in Paris, Battle of the Bulge, our tanks rumbling toward Hitler's bunker. Victory. We revere my father's contemporaries as the "Greatest Generation." And their bravery and sacrifice is beyond question. But when the Greatest Generation handed down the story of the war in Europe, they often neglected to mention that it was the Red Army that broke Hitler's back.

The Soviet losses were staggering. In 1941, at the First Battle of Kiev, the Soviet army suffered 700,000 killed, wounded and captured. If you count German losses and civilian carnage, the figure approaches 1 million. That's just one of the battles fought at Kiev. There were others.

Then there's the secluded gully where in two days in September 1941, the victorious Germans shot 33,771 Jews. Executions of Jews, communists, partisans, gypsies and others continued at the Babi Yar ravine until 1943. A hundred thousand may have died there. Maybe more.

The Soviets erected a grandiose marker in a nearby park in 1976 but didn't quite have room on the tablet to mention that the people shot to death were mostly Jews. Eventually a memorial in the shape of a menorah was built in the woods nearby, overlooking the lip of the ravine.

Yet despite all this sadness and grief, there is wonder and splendor, too. Twist your way down the street known as St. Andrew's Descent, past the wedding-cake architecture of St. Andrew's Church and the tiny cafes clinging to the slope, and you can almost imagine you are seeing Kiev 100 years ago, when the great novelist Mikhail Bulgakov ("The Master and Margarita") lived and worked in a little house on the right.

To find much of this charm, you must look around, or at least understand, the top layer of the city: the Soviet layer. It has a special grimness. Peeling back the layers of a place takes time. I was in Miami for 16 years and spent most of the time trying to figure out what was at the heart of it. I eventually figured out that the center wasn't very important. It was what was on the glittering surface that mattered.

Kiev is the opposite, I think. Yes, it's a city with plenty of tricks. But it has been around for more than 14 centuries. Kiev knows who it is.

The place where I feel the heart of Kiev most intensely is looking at the green and golden domes of St. Sophia's Cathedral. This building somehow survived the attack of Batu Khan and his Golden Horde in the 13th century. Down the street, the khan, grandson of Genghis Khan, burned down an even older church with 3,000 Kievans inside. St. Sophia's also survived the czars, the Bolshevik Revolution and Hitler. It survived Stalin's penchant for blowing churches to smithereens.

Kievans tell of a legend that the call of the city's church bells can weave a shield over the city.

Looking at them with my foreign eyes, I consider the centuries of faith here and think about being from a culture where a shield involves missiles or lasers.

And it occurs to me that when I leave, the thing I will miss most of all will be the bells.

TREY RATCLIFF/WWW.STUCKINCUSTOMS.COM

St. Sophia's Cathedral has survived centuries of warfare in Kiev, Ukraine.

Pancake is a former Washington Post *editor.*

'Avatar' rules with $68.3M, tops $1B worldwide

LOS ANGELES (AP)—James Cameron's science-fiction epic "Avatar" had another stellar weekend with $68.3 million domestically, shooting past $1 billion worldwide, only the fifth movie ever to hit that mark.

No. 1 for the third-straight weekend, 20th Century Fox's "Avatar" raised its domestic total to $352.1 million after just 17 days. The film added $133 million overseas to lift its international haul to $670 million, for a worldwide gross of $1.02 billion.

"Avatar" opened two weekends earlier with $77 million, a strong start but far below dozens of other blockbusters that debuted as high as $158 million. But business for other blockbusters usually tumbles in following weekends, while "Avatar" revenues barely dropped over the busy Christmas and New Year's weekends.

"It's like a runaway freight train. It just keeps doing business," said Fox distribution executive Bert Livingston. "Here's what's happening: I think everybody has to see 'Avatar' once. Even people who don't normally go to the movies, they've heard about it and are saying, 'I have to see it.' Then there's those people seeing it multiple times."

1. "**Avatar**," $68.3 million.
2. "**Sherlock Holmes**," $38.4 million.
3. "**Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel**," $36.6 million.
4. "**It's Complicated**," $18.7 million.
5. "**The Blind Side**," $12.7 million.
6. "**Up in the Air**," $11.4 million.
7. "**The Princess and the Frog**," $10 million.
8. "**Did You Hear About the Morgans?**", $5.2 million.
9. "**Nine**," $4.3 million.
10. "**Invictus**," $4.1 million.

"Avatar" was Cameron's first film since 1997's "Titanic," the biggest modern blockbuster with $1.8 billion worldwide.

Cameron now is the only filmmaker to direct two movies that have topped $1 billion. Along with "Titanic," the others are "The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King" at $1.13 billion, "Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest" at $1.06 billion and "The Dark Knight" at a fraction over $1 billion, according to box-office tracker Hollywood.com.

With "Avatar" closing in on No. 2 film "The Return of the King," Cameron is in striking distance of having the two top-grossing movies globally.

Finishing at No. 2 for the weekend was Robert Downey Jr.'s crime caper "Sherlock Holmes" with $38.4 million. The Warner Bros. film lifted its domestic total to $140.7 million after 10 days in theaters.

In third place was 20th Century Fox's family tale "Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel" with $36.6 million. It raised its 10-day total to $157.3 million.

The top-three movies, along with solid holdovers that included Universal's "It's Complicated" at No. 4 with $18.7 million, steered Hollywood to a big start to 2010 after a year of record revenue.

Hollywood finished 2009 with $10.6 billion domestically, easily surpassing the previous record of $9.7 billion in 2007, according to Hollywood.com.

Factoring in today's higher admission prices, the year was strong but not a modern record-breaker for number of tickets sold. According to Hollywood.com, domestic admissions came in at 1.42 billion in 2009, the most in the last five years, though well below the modern record of 1.6 billion in 2002.

Studios began 2010 with a headstart over last year. Overall revenues came in at $230 million, up 50 percent from New Year's weekend in 2009, when "Marley & Me" was No. 1 with $24.3 million.

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at U.S. and Canadian theaters, according to Hollywood.com. Final figures will be released Monday.

AP

This undated file photo released by 20th Century Fox, the character Neytiri, voiced by Zoe Saldana, is shown in a scene from "Avatar."

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Sherlock Holmes

Friday & Saturday	1:05	4:05	7:05	9:55
Sunday	1:05	4:05	7:05	
Mon thru Thurs		4:05	7:05	

Robert Downey, Jr., Jude Law
Action, Mystery • Rated PG 13

Synopsis
Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's famous super-sleuth, Sherlock Holmes, gets an update with this adaptation of Lionel Wigram's comic book series by writer/director Guy Ritchie (RocknRolla) starring Robert Downey Jr. as the titular detective, with Jude Law stepping into the shoes of his sidekick, Dr. Watson. Heading up the rest of the cast are RocknRolla's Mark Strong as the film's villain, Blackwood, and Rachel McAdams portraying the love interest, Irene Adler.

It's Complicated

Friday & Saturday	1:30	4:20	7:10	9:40
Sunday	1:30	4:20	7:10	
Mon thru Thurs		4:20	7:10	

Meryl Streep, Alec Baldwin
Comedy • Rated R

Synopsis
Veteran writer/director Nancy Meyers (Something's Gotta Give, What Women Want) returns to familiar romantic comedy territory with this untitled production for Universal Pictures starring Meryl Streep as a woman who finds herself caught in the middle of dual romantic advances from two suitors (played by Steve Martin and Alec Baldwin).

Alvin & The Chipmunks: The Sqeakquel

Friday & Saturday	1:15	4:15	7:25	9:30
Sunday	1:15	4:15	7:25	
Mon thru Thurs		4:15	7:25	

Justin Long, Matthew Gray Gubler
Children, Family • Rated PG

Synopsis
The lovable singing-and-dancing trio of famous marmots continues their big-screen hijinks with this follow-up to the 20th Century Fox smash-hit live-action/CG family comedy, this time incorporating a female version of the group entitled the Chipettes. Dr. Dolittle's Betty Thomas helms with Justin Long, Matthew Gray Gubler, and Jesse McCartney returning as the voices of Alvin, Simon, and Theodore.

Avatar

Friday & Saturday	12:50	3:55	6:55	10:00
Sunday	12:50	3:55	6:55	
Mon thru Thurs		3:55	6:55	

Sam Worthington, Zoe Saldana
Science Fiction • Rated PG 13

Did You Hear About The Morgans?

Friday & Saturday	1:20	4:10	7:30	9:50
Sunday	1:20	4:10	7:30	
Mon thru Thurs		4:10	7:30	

Hugh Grant, Sarah Jessica Parker
Comedy • Rated PG 13

The Princess And The Frog

Friday & Saturday	1:10	4:30	7:20	9:35
Sunday	1:10	4:30	7:20	
Mon thru Thurs		4:30	7:20	

Anika Noni Rose, John Goodman
Comedy, Family • Rated G

Twilight Saga: New Moon

Friday & Saturday	1:00	4:00	7:00	9:45
Sunday	1:00	4:00	7:00	
Mon thru Thurs		4:00	7:00	

Robert Pattinson, Kristen Stewart
Thriller, Romance • Rated PG 13

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Reports: Berlusconi writing love songs

ROME (AP)—Italian Premier Silvio Berlusconi has returned to an old passion of his while recovering from last month's attack at a rally: writing Neapolitan love songs, news reports said.

Berlusconi also made his first public appearance since the Dec. 13 attack, going to a shopping mall close to his villa in Milan, Corriere della Sera and other Italian newspapers said Friday. The reports said the premier spent about two hours in the mall on Thursday afternoon before going back to his villa to host a New Year's Eve dinner party.

During the attack, a mentally unstable man threw a souvenir statuette of Milan's cathedral at Berlusconi's face, breaking his nose and two of his teeth. The 73-year-old leader was hospitalized for a few days and had remained away from the public.

La Stampa and other newspapers said Thursday that Berlusconi is working on a new CD of love songs with Neapolitan composer Mariano Apicella. La Stampa said that so far eight songs have been composed. The pair have worked together in the past, with Berlusconi composing the lyrics of songs in previous CDs of Neapolitan ballads.

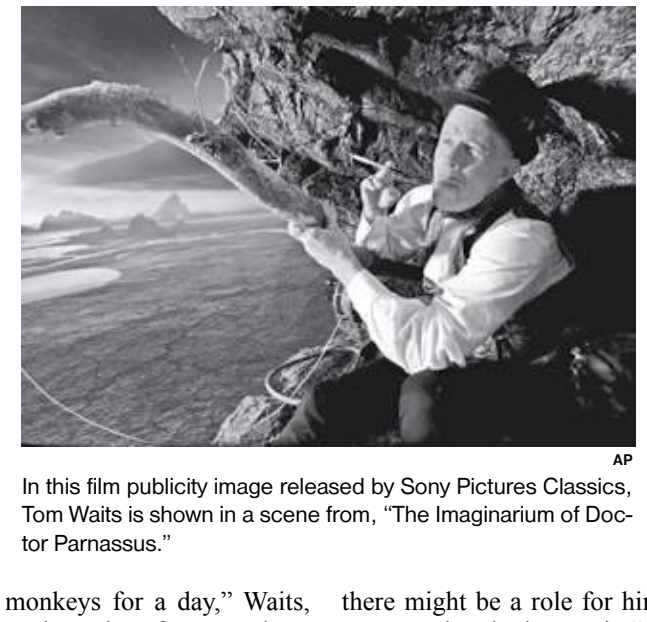
Nobody was immediately available in the premier's office to confirm the news reports.

Berlusconi often has said he likes to stay up at night to compose Neapolitan love songs. As a young man—before he became a media mogul and, later, a politician—Berlusconi used to sing on a cruise ship.

Waits goes to the devil in Gilliam's 'Parnassus'

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Tom Waits has given the devil his due with wry song lyrics, asking if the devil made the "world while God was sleeping" or musing "don't you know there ain't no devil, there's just God when he's drunk."

Now Waits is the devil incarnate in Terry Gilliam's "The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus," playing a dapper demon with a bowler hat, trim suit and pencil-thin mustache who loves nothing better than gambling with people's souls.



AP

In this film publicity image released by Sony Pictures Classics, Tom Waits is shown in a scene from, "The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus."

Gilliam had the notion of giving the devil an old-fashioned, gentlemanly look. To help capture the devil's spirit, Waits spent time with some lower primates.

"I went to the zoo and watched monkeys for a day," Waits, 60, said in a phone interview from northern California, where he lives. "I just wanted to be relaxed, because if the devil's not relaxed, nobody's relaxed."

Waits' devil, known as Mr. Nick, may be loose and laid-back, but his outfit is the opposite, tight and constrictive.

"I had to be sewn into my costume," Waits said. "It's like Marilyn Monroe when she sang 'Happy birthday, Mr. President.'"

Waits, whose albums include the Grammy-winning "Bone Machine" and "Mule Variations," has built an impressive side career on screen, appearing in about two dozen films starting with Sylvester Stallone's "Paradise Alley" in 1978.

He played Jack Nicholson's hobo pal in "Ironweed," one of a threesome of prison escapees in Jim Jarmusch's "Down by Law," Lily Tomlin's boozy companion in Robert Altman's "Short Cuts" and the vampire's raving-mad devotee in Francis Ford Coppola's "Dracula."

Waits quickly follows "Doctor Parnassus," which opened Christmas Day and expands nationwide Jan. 8, with a small role in Denzel Washington's doomsday tale, "The Book of Eli," debuting Jan. 15.

Waits, who had a bit part in Gilliam's "The Fisher King," asked Gilliam whether there might be a role for him in his new film. He agreed to do the part in "Doctor Parnassus," even before reading the script.

The film stars Christopher Plummer as Parnassus, who gained immortality and youth in deals with Waits' Mr. Nick and now is desperate to save his daughter's soul from the devil. Heath Ledger, who died while the film was in production, plays a shady charity fundraiser who becomes the key to Parnassus' wager with Mr. Nick.

"Book of Eli" casts Waits as sort of the pawnbroker of the apocalypse, a man who trades for trinkets left over from our civilization after a catastrophe levels American society.

Group in NYC picks 'Hurt Locker' as best 2009 film

NEW YORK (AP)—The National Society of Film Critics on Sunday selected "The Hurt Locker," a film about an elite Army bomb squad unit that works in Iraq to defuse improvised explosives while under the threat of insurgents, as the best picture of 2009.

The society, composed of film critics from some of the country's top publications, also bestowed honors on the movie's director, Kathryn Bigelow, and lead actor, Jeremy Renner.

The society picked Yolande Moreau as best actress for her performance in "Seraphine," a French film about the painter Seraphine de Senlis.

Joel and Ethan Coen won best screenplay for "A Serious Man," a dark comedy set in 1967, while "The Beaches of Agnes 40," an autobiographical documentary about the life of director Agnes Varda, was selected as the best nonfiction film.

"Summer Hours," a story of three siblings by French filmmaker Olivier Assayas, won for best foreign language film.

Mo'Nique, the Baltimore-born comedian best known for her roles in television sitcoms and as the host of her own talk show, was selected as best supporting actress for her portrayal of an abusive mother in "Precious."

Austrian Christoph Waltz won for best supporting actor for his work as the Jew Hunter in "Inglourious Basterds," a Quentin Tarantino war film starring Brad Pitt as the leader of a group of soldiers trying to kill Adolf Hitler.

Forty-six of the society's 64 members voted during Sunday's meeting at a midtown Manhattan restaurant.

The society, founded in 1966, has a reputation for picking foreign films or critics' darlings. Rarely do the group's selections mirror those given out during the Academy Awards, but its members are highly esteemed by filmmakers and film critics.

The Academy Awards are set for March 7.

AP

Rapper Eminem performs at a concert celebrating the launch of the video game "DJ Hero" in Los Angeles on in this June 1, 2009 file photo.

Elton John says he's helping Eminem fight drug problems

LONDON (AP)—Elton John says he has been helping American rapper Eminen fight drug problems for more than a year.

John says Eminem is succeeding in his well-publicized battle against substance abuse.

John told BBC Radio Saturday that as a recovered drug abuser he is happy to help people if they want the assistance but drugs make people so cocky and arrogant that they often reject help.

Eminem has written about his substance abuse problems in the past

AP

Canadian country music sensation Shania Twain lights the Olympic Cauldron with the Olympic Flame at Hollinger Park in her hometown of Timmins, Ontario on Friday, Jan. 1, 2010.

Regis Philbin returns next week after hip replacement

NEW YORK (AP)—Regis Philbin is set to return to his daytime talk show next week after successful hip replacement surgery.

Philbin has been on the disabled list since the Dec. 1 operation. He makes his return to "Live! With Regis and Kelly" on Jan. 4.

Kelly Ripa has been working with guest hosts while Philbin has been away.

He hasn't been completely out of sight: The 78-year-old Philbin called in to pal David Letterman's show this month to deliver a "Top Ten" list.

Amy Adams, Tim Allen, Jenna Elfman and pilot Chesley Sullenberger will be among his first-week guests.

AP

In this Jan. 14, 2009 file photo, Regis Philbin attends the 2008 National Board of Review of Motion Pictures awards gala in New York. Philbin is set to return to his daytime talk show next week after successful hip replacement surgery.

Shania Twain carries Olympic torch

TIMMINS, Ontario (AP)—Shania Twain carried the Olympic torch the final 400 yards into Hollinger Park, cheered on by thousands of parka-clad fans who turned out in arctic conditions to see the hometown hero in person Friday night.

After making her final turn toward the stage, Twain paused, held the torch aloft in her mittened left hand, and waved to the crowd. The country star then bounded the final few yards onto the stage, where she lit the Olympic cauldron.

"I feel proud, very proud," Twain said. "It's a highlight of my life to be able to carry the flame, to light the cauldron."

At 16 degrees below zero and windy, it was so cold that when a dozen red beach balls were tossed into the crowd, the balls came apart within seconds.

"I know that sounds crazy, but it wouldn't be Timmins if it wasn't 40 below with the wind chill factor!" Twain said.

Taiwan invites China's Zhang Yimou to produce show

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP)—A senior Taiwanese official has invited Chinese director Zhang Yimou to produce an outdoor show at the island's scenic Taroko Gorge, a newspaper reported Saturday.

Fu Kun-chi, chief of Hualien county, was quoted by the China Times newspaper as saying Zhang has sent a team to explore the location but has yet to formally commit to the project.

Zhang designed the opening and closing ceremonies for the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

His production team is also known for creating the "Impression" series of shows in China's scenic West Lake, Lijiang and Guilin, mixing folklore and natural scenery.

Taroko Gorge, in eastern Hualien, is one of Taiwan's most popular tourist attractions, featuring a 12-mile (19-kilometer) marble canyon next to towering cliffs.

If Zhang agrees to produce the show, it could help draw mainland and international tourists to Taiwan, Fu was quoted as saying.

Representatives for Zhang could not be reached for comment on Saturday.

Retired mom adopts daughter's house as new full-time job

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
FROM UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby

DEAR ABBY: My mom has recently retired and is spending a lot of time at our home. She's constantly doing things—emptying the washer, drying dishes. Anything that is untouched for a few minutes she'll get into. She also reorganizes our drawers and cabinets and thinks her way is best.

She even remakes the children's beds, which is part of their chores. She feels a bed needs to "air" for an hour after its occupant wakes up. When I tell her she doesn't need to do it, she says she doesn't mind—but she's missing the point.

Mom is hurt because she feels I don't appreciate her, and I am hurt that she doesn't respect my rules. I'm grateful for everything she does, but I would like her to visit with her grandchildren and enjoy her retirement while she's at our home. What should I do?

FRUSTRATED IN AUDUBON, PA.

DEAR FRUSTRATED: The problem isn't that your mother doesn't respect your rules. I suspect it's that she has worked all her life and isn't used to being idle. She may also feel so at home in your house that she automatically behaves as though she were in hers.

Have a chat with her and try to reach a compromise. Your drawers and cabinets should be off limits, and the children should be permitted to fulfill their chores. But if emptying the washer and drying the dishes makes her happy, let her do it and thank her for her efforts.

Your mother appears to be full of energy and have a lot of time on her hands. So why not encourage her to volunteer some of it at her church, a thrift store or a charity of her choosing? It will help her develop outside interests, meet new people and form some new friendships—all of which will allow her less time to be "helping" you.

■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: My father died last year. Shortly after his funeral I sold his car to a friend in need for $200. Her husband let it slip a couple of days ago that they had discovered a cane tucked beneath the front seat with more than $300 stuffed inside. The bills had rotted, but they were able to take them to the bank and exchange them for new ones. They have spent the money.

I am torn. Shouldn't they have told me and perhaps offered to split that money? Or, since they bought the car, were all of its contents theirs? They got the car AND made $100 on the deal.

FUMING IN WASHINGTON STATE

DEAR FUMING: You call these people friends? This isn't a matter of what would be right under the law. If they were true friends, they would have told you they had found the cane, in case it had sentimental value—and offered you the contents as well.

■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: When someone I'm talking to starts to cry in front of me, I never know what to do. I often feel helpless. Should I hug the person? I usually end up just sitting there waiting for them to collect themselves. How can I comfort someone like this?

FEELING HELPLESS IN FLORIDA

DEAR FEELING HELPLESS: Unless you know someone well, I do not recommend hugging. However, if there's a tissue available, it would be a kindness to hand it over and tell the person you're sorry he or she is hurting and if he or she needs to talk, you're willing to listen.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

For an excellent guide to becoming a better conversationalist and a more sociable person, order "How to Be Popular." Send a business-sized, self-addressed envelope, plus check or money order for $6 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby—Popularity Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Postage is included in the price.)

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

YOU KNOW THAT LOOSE BOARD ON THE PORCH?
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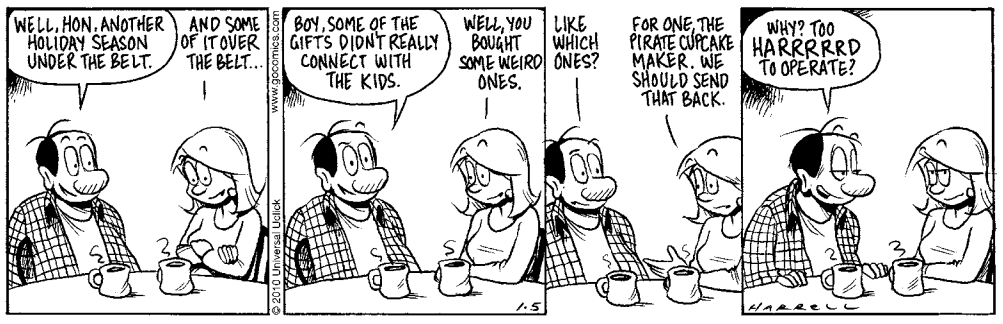
www.garfield.com
JIM DAVIS 1-5
I FINALLY NAILED IT BACK DOWN!
I HEARD
LET'S SEE WHAT'S NEXT ON MY LIST
SCREAMS LIKE THAT REALLY CARRY
Distributed by Universal Press Syndicate

Adam@home

By Bryan Basset


WELL, HON, ANOTHER HOLIDAY SEASON UNDER THE BELT.
AND SOME OF IT OVER THE BELT...
BOY, SOME OF THE GIFTS DIDN'T REALLY CONNECT WITH THE KIDS.
WELL, YOU BOUGHT SOME WEIRD ONES.
LIKE WHICH ONES?
FOR ONE, THE PIRATE CUPCAKE MAKER. WE SHOULD SEND THAT BACK.
WHY? TOO HARRRRRD TO OPERATE?
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www.gocomics.com
1-5
HARRELL

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

WHEN I WAS A TEEN I USED TO THINK MY GENERATION'S MUSIC WAS THE BEST AND EVERYTHING ELSE SUCKED.
BUT NOW THAT I'M OLDER AND MORE MATURE...
I'M CERTAIN THAT MY GENERATION'S MUSIC IS THE BEST AND EVERYTHING ELSE SUCKS.
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1-5

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

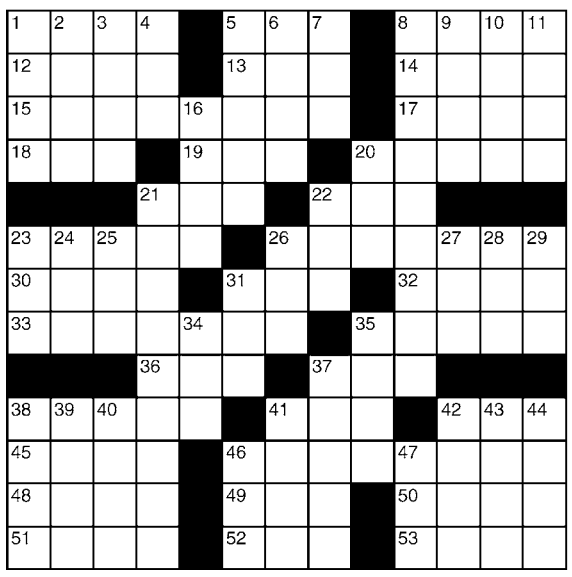
ACROSS
1 Anthropologist Margaret
5 Gullible one
8 Door-frame piece
12 Killer whale
13 Sine — non
14 "Birthplace of Aviation"
15 England's Uncle Sam
17 "— Free"
18 Sugar suffix
19 Disencumber
20 Vessel in icy waters
21 Poke
22 Snapshot
23 Noble title
26 Black leopard
30 Baldwin or Guinness
31 Enjoyment
32 "The Music Man" setting
33 Mr. Pike of peak fame
35 Clan emblem
36 Bagel topping
37 Coffee break hour
38 Summarize
41 "Indeed"
42 Adversary
45 Smell
46 Riding breeches
48 Pickle flavor
49 Toss in
50 Break suddenly
51 Remain
52 Festive
53 One way to stand by

DOWN
1 Voodoo charm
2 Cupid's alias
3 Rue the run
4 Newsman Rather
5 Filler news item
6 "— Lang Syne"
7 Chum
8 Form of protest at work
9 "Hey, swabbie!"
10 Actress Sorvino
11 Hit on the noggin
16 Cereal choice
20 Family
21 In a playful way
22 Skillet
23 Movie director Luhrmann
24 Hearty brew
25 Confederate soldier
26 Play on words
27 Spicy
28 One of a lamb's parents ...
29 .. .and the other
31 "Family Guy" network
34 Prune
35 New Age music-maker John
37 Cohort of George, Tom and Abe
38 Scepters
39 Tend texts
40 Pop flavor
41 Luke's mentor
42 Treasury
43 Exam format
44 Catch sight of
46 Binge
47 Omega preceder

Solution time: 21 mins.

O	D	D			B	R	A		M	A	Y	A
M	O	R	T		O	E	R		I	D	E	S
S	T	A	R		W	A	G		S	O	P	H
K	E	B	A	B		M	O	H	S			
			N	A	B		T	R	I	F	L	E
M	A	R	S	H	A	L		S	O	L	E	D
A	R	A	M		T	A	N		N	E	E	D
R	I	G	I	D		S	I	L	V	E	R	Y
V	A	S	S	A	R		L	E	I			
			S	M	U	G		D	E	C	O	Y
K	I	W	I		N	O	D		J	A	V	A
E	C	H	O		O	R	E		O	M	A	N
N	E	O	N		N	E	W		E	L	K	

Yesterday's answer 1-5



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Marilyn Manson, 41; Pamela Sue Martin, 57; Diane Keaton, 64; Robert Duvall, 79

Happy Birthday: Don't worry about the little things this year. Focus on the larger picture and the rest will fall into place. Getting off track will be the problem, so stick to your game plan and finish what you start. Do your own fact-finding. Time is money and keeping the momentum going is your job. Your numbers are 5, 13, 17, 24, 27, 36, 43

ARIES (*March 21-April 19*): You will have to do a lot of troubleshooting in order to move forward. Don't let minor setbacks stall your progress—bypass such occurrences. Be smart, act fast and don't leave any room for error. ✪✪✪

TAURUS (*April 20-May 20*): Show what you have to offer and how you can be of service to someone who can alter your current position. Network and take part in events that interest you. Combining travel and talks will promote love and romance. ✪✪✪✪✪

GEMINI (*May 21-June 20*): Put your time and effort into building a healthy financial position. Saving may not be your thing but right now you have to stick to a budget. Someone who is money smart will present a good investment plan. Don't be shortsighted. ✪✪

CANCER (*June 21-July 22*): Don't waste time trying to spare feelings or save someone from disappointment. Discuss issues swiftly, accurately and without sugarcoating any existing problems. Being upfront will spare you grief later. A romantic gesture will help ease some of your stress. ✪✪✪✪

LEO (*July 23-Aug. 22*): Make professional changes that allow you greater freedom to pursue something that really interests you. Sticking to an old goal will help to lower your stress and give you something to look forward to. Success is ahead of you if you work hard now. ✪✪✪

VIRGO (*Aug. 23-Sept. 22*): You have the stamina and know-how to master any pitfalls you face. Romance will play an important role in helping you get what you want. Your kind gestures and sincere concern for others will provide the help you need. ✪✪✪

LIBRA (*Sept. 23-Oct. 22*): You will face major opposition if you are vocal or you try to get someone to do things your way. Listen and observe. Focus on your own creative endeavors instead of getting in the middle of someone else's battle. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO (*Oct. 23-Nov. 21*): Don't hold back introducing something a little unique that you feel can set you apart from anyone else with a similar idea. Your dedication, loyalty and creative imagination will help you come out on top. ✪✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS (*Nov. 22-Dec. 21*): Don't forget about what actually counts. If you disappoint someone who has helped you in the past, you will lose help in the future. Keep things simple and affordable and don't break promises you have made. ✪✪

CAPRICORN (*Dec. 22-Jan. 19*): You have to act if you want to make the most of a good situation. There is money to be made, deals to be negotiated and contracts to be signed. You've done the groundwork, now prepare to reap the rewards. ✪✪✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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AQUARIUS (*Jan. 20-Feb. 18*): You have to work on problems that develop before anyone catches on to what's happening. Keep your interests safe and quiet from those who may cause trouble for you. A partnership can work if you share the same mindset. ✪✪✪

PISCES (*Feb. 19-March 20*): Form a good, working relationship with someone with enough clout to help you move to the next level. Consider making a lifestyle change that will fit into your future plans better than your current situation. Stop fighting against the odds. ✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are a practical individual who looks for the best and most efficient way to do things. You are energetic, creative, classy and charming.

Eugenia's Web sites: ***eugenialast.com*** *for confidential consultations,* ***myspace.com/eugenialast*** *for Eugenia's blog,* ***astroadvice.com*** *for fun*

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

7	9						6	3
				3				
8	3		9		6		4	5
		1				2		
	5			4			8	
		8				4		
2	1		4		5		3	7
				2				
6	7						2	8

Difficulty Level ★★ 1/05

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's SUDOKU Answer

4	3	5	7	1	8	9	6	2
1	8	9	3	2	6	5	4	7
6	2	7	4	9	5	1	8	3
8	4	1	9	5	7	2	3	6
5	6	2	8	4	3	7	9	1
7	9	3	2	6	1	4	5	8
9	7	4	6	3	2	8	1	5
3	5	8	1	7	9	6	2	4
2	1	6	5	8	4	3	7	9

Difficulty Level ★ 1/04

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally, even backward. Find them and **CIRCLE THEIR LETTERS ONLY. DO NOT CIRCLE THE WORD.** The leftover letters spell the Wonderword.

DUCK RILLETTES **Solution: 9 letters**

S	Y	E	L	S	R	A	P	C	D	E	C	N	I	M
S	T	E	L	B	I	G	E	L	A	T	I	N	I	F
S	L	N	B	P	O	K	C	O	T	S	A	X	C	A
N	A	T	E	O	A	P	H	V	A	A	T	S	I	N
O	I	U	S	I	I	T	A	E	E	U	A	I	T	C
T	C	E	C	A	D	L	S	S	R	L	N	M	O	Y
U	E	E	P	E	O	E	E	E	T	B	O	M	X	R
O	P	M	C	I	P	T	R	D	I	Y	S	E	E	T
R	S	P	Y	I	C	A	P	G	F	E	A	R	N	L
C	H	E	F	H	P	E	N	E	N	T	E	E	T	U
O	I	Z	B	E	T	S	R	I	O	I	S	D	R	O
G	G	A	R	L	I	C	W	E	Ⓒ	Ⓞ	Ⓞ	Ⓚ	E	P
N	R	P	E	P	P	E	R	C	O	R	N	S	E	A
A	F	L	A	V	O	R	E	B	M	U	C	U	C	T
C	D	E	D	D	E	R	H	S	N	O	I	N	O	E

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Boiled, Bread, Chef, Cloves, Cognac, Confit, Cook, Croutons, Cucumber, Entree, Exotic, Fancy, Flavor, Garlic, Gelatin, Giblets, Goose, Herbs, Ingredients, Minced, Mixture, Onions, Parsley, Pasty, Pate, Peppercorns, Poultry, Prepare, Recipe, Salt, Saucepan, Season, Shredded, Simmered, Specialty, Spice, Staple, Stock, Tasty, Thyme, Toast, Treat, Wine

Yesterday's Answer: Camping

Treasury 7 Send check or money order for $10.95 each plus $3.25 postage and handling each ($14.20 total each, U.S. funds only) for the first volume, $1.50 p&h for each additional volume, to Universal Uclick, Attn: Wonderword, 1130 Walnut St., Kansas City, Mo. 64105 or call toll-free, 1-800-542-6480 Order online at upuzzles.com.

CLASSIFIED ADS

FOR RENT - RESIDENTIAL

Fina Sisu Apt., 2-BR, 1-BTH, FF, AC, BU Genset/ 24-hr water, security, laundry room, free Wi-Fi & ample parking. Right behind NMC campus. MIHA applicants accepted. Special rates for NMC faculty/ students. Call 235-6527/8 or 285-1317 for info.

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SUBWAY® Career Opportunities

SUBWAY, the largest quick service restaurant chain in North America and on Guam, is looking for career-minded individuals to grow with our management team!

Position: Operations Manager

Job Description:

Successful candidate will be tasked with managing multi-unit restaurants including:

- Personnel management-directly supervise five or more employees in the Store(s) assigned
- Leads and motivates team to ensure financial success of each store assigned and makes hiring, firing, disciplinary and evaluation decisions
- Estimates food and beverage costs and requisition or purchases supplies needed for the assigned store
- Analyze store financial performance and ensure satisfaction for each sandwich made
- Make scheduling decisions to adequately support sales of each restaurant
- Communicates with senior management to report on operational issues
- Supports implements and communicates company policies and procedures to all staff on a human resources level of for the stores betterment
- Continuously works to improve training and development of the team
- Investigates and resolves food quality and service complaints
- Maintain quality standards and sanitation regulations

**Candidate will also be entitled to performance based compensation and other benefits. Training program will be provided; salary to be based on job performance upon completion of training. **

Requirements

- Graduate with degree in Business Management from accredited institution preferred, but not required.
- Three to Five years training and/or experience in restaurant management preferred
- Must posses Reasoning Ability & Strong Communication Skills (Fluent English oral & written)
- Must have knowledge of Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet software and Microsoft Word Processing software
- Competent in Leadership, Quality Management, Problem-solving capabilities to promote teamwork.
- Eligible to work or reside in US/Guam or to travel in Japan for business assignment.
- Must have a valid health certificate, valid Drivers license, and passport for travel.

Please drop off resume (with recent photo) in sealed envelope, attention to Human Resources Department, at our Subway Development Agent office located at: 2nd Floor Transpac Business Center, Middle Road, Gualo Rai, Saipan.

**No phone call, please **

Deadline for submission of application is on ***January 28, 2010***

WHATZIT Solution: Takeover bid

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

KIM CHANG SOOK and KIM JAE WON, Plaintiffs, -v- NOBUYUKI KUROSAWA AND AIOI INSURANCE COMPANY, LTD., Defendants.) CIVIL ACTION NO. 08-0473

SUMMONS FOR PUBLICATION

TO THE ABOVE-NAMED DEFENDANT, NOBUYUKI KUROSAWA:

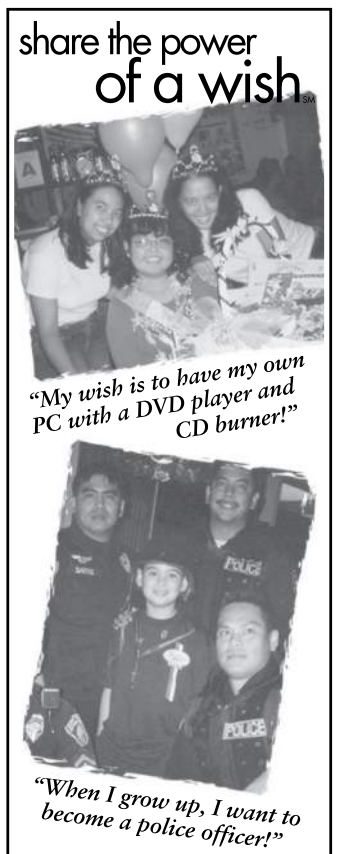
YOU ARE HEREBY SUMMONED and notified to file any answer you wish to make to the Complaint, a copy of which is served upon you hereby, within twenty-one (21) days after the fourth publication of this Summons, and to deliver or mail a copy of your answer to The Law Offices of Michael A. White, LCC, the Plaintiffs Attorneys, whose address is P.O. Box 5222, Saipan, MP 96950, as soon as practicable after filing your answer or sending it to the Clerk of Courts for filing.

Your answer should be in writing and filed with the Clerk of this Court at Susupe, Saipan. It may be prepared a signed for you by your counsel and sent to the Clerk of this Court by messenger or mail. It is not necessary for you to apear personally until further notice. If you fail to answer in accordance with this Summons, judgment by default may be taken against you for the relief demanded in the Complaint.

By order of the above court:

/S/ Deputy Clerk of Court

DATED, this 11th day of December, 2009.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"When I grow up, I want to become a police officer!"
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www.wish.org
Office Hours: 8:30am to 5:30pm
M-F daily
Saipan Tribune

CLASSIFIEDS RATES AND POLICIES

Saipan Tribune's Classifieds Section gives you the right exposure without hurting your pockets. Stretch your dollar and get results.

CLASSIFIED ADS

Saipan Tribune also offers a Super Saver Package—a complete 7-day run on both print and online edition, for as low as $25 per 3 liner ad for garage sales, apartment rentals, help wanted, auto and more. You can choose from any of below packages that fits your budget.

ADS (7DAYS)	COMBO (PRINT AND ONLINE)
• 3-Liner	$25
• 5-Liner	$35
• 3-Liner with picture	$45
• 5-Liner with picture	$55

ADVERTISING DEADLINE

Classified Ads

Ads must be submitted before 12 noon 2 days prior to publication date

Saturday Issue:
- *Saipan Tribune:* All ads placed Friday before 12 noon will come out Saturday issue and anything placed thereafter will be published on Monday issue.

CANCELLATION

Classified Ads

Cancellations should be made before 12 noon of the day prior to date of publication.

REFUNDS

Refunds will only be made if cancellation deadlines are met. No refunds will be made once ad is already printed.

CHECK YOUR ADS

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Jets earn playoff spot with 37-0 rout of Bengals

EAST RUTHERFORD, New Jersey (AP)—Rex Ryan's top-ranked defense shut down the Cincinnati Bengals as the New York Jets clinched their first playoff berth in three seasons with a 37-0 victory at a frigid Meadowlands on Sunday.

Needing a win to keep their season alive, the Jets (9-7) set up a rematch against the Bengals (10-6) in the first round of the playoffs Saturday at Cincinnati.

Rookie Mark Sanchez was 8 for 16 for 63 yards with no turnovers before being replaced by Kellen Clemens late in the fourth quarter with the game in hand. Thomas Jones ran for 78 yards and two touchdowns and do-it-all Brad Smith had 92 yards rushing, including a 32-yard TD run, as the Jets set a record for rushing yards in a season.

Texans 34, Patriots 27

At Houston, rookie Arian Foster scored two touchdowns and Bernard Pollard recovered a fumble for a touchdown as the Texans briefly kept their slim playoff hopes alive before the Jets snatched it away.

The Texans, who finished with a winning record for the first time in team history, needed the Jets to lose against Cincinnati in Sunday's night game to earn the team's first postseason appearance in its eight-year history.

Tom Brady played most of the game despite New England (10-6) having already clinched its playoff spot.

Cowboys 24, Eagles 0

At Arlington, Texas, Tony Romo threw a pair of early touchdown passes and the defense took over from there, sending Dallas to the National Football Conference East title.

The Cowboys (11-5) earned their third straight impressive win, and the shutout also made for a major milestone in the club's storied history: First-ever back-to-back blankings. Only twice in the previous 49 seasons had they even had two shutouts the entire season.

Donovan McNabb was 20 of 36 for 223 yards, and Philadelphia (11-5) finished with 228 total yards.

Ravens 21, Raiders 13

At Oakland, California, Willis McGahee ran for a career-high 167 yards and three touchdowns as the Ravens clinched an American Football Conference wild-card berth.

The Ravens (9-7) went into the regular season finale knowing a win would put them in the playoffs and a loss would send them home for an early winter. The Raiders (5-11) provided a stiff challenge for much of the game but were unable to pull it out in the end behind former starter JaMarcus Russell.

Titans 17, Seahawks 13

At Seattle, Chris Johnson became the sixth player in NFL history to rush for 2,000 yards in a season, then scored the go-ahead touchdown on a 1-yard run with 4:33 remaining.

Johnson ran 36 times—three short of Earl Campbell's franchise record set in 1981 against Seattle—for 134 yards and both touchdowns for the Titans (8-8).

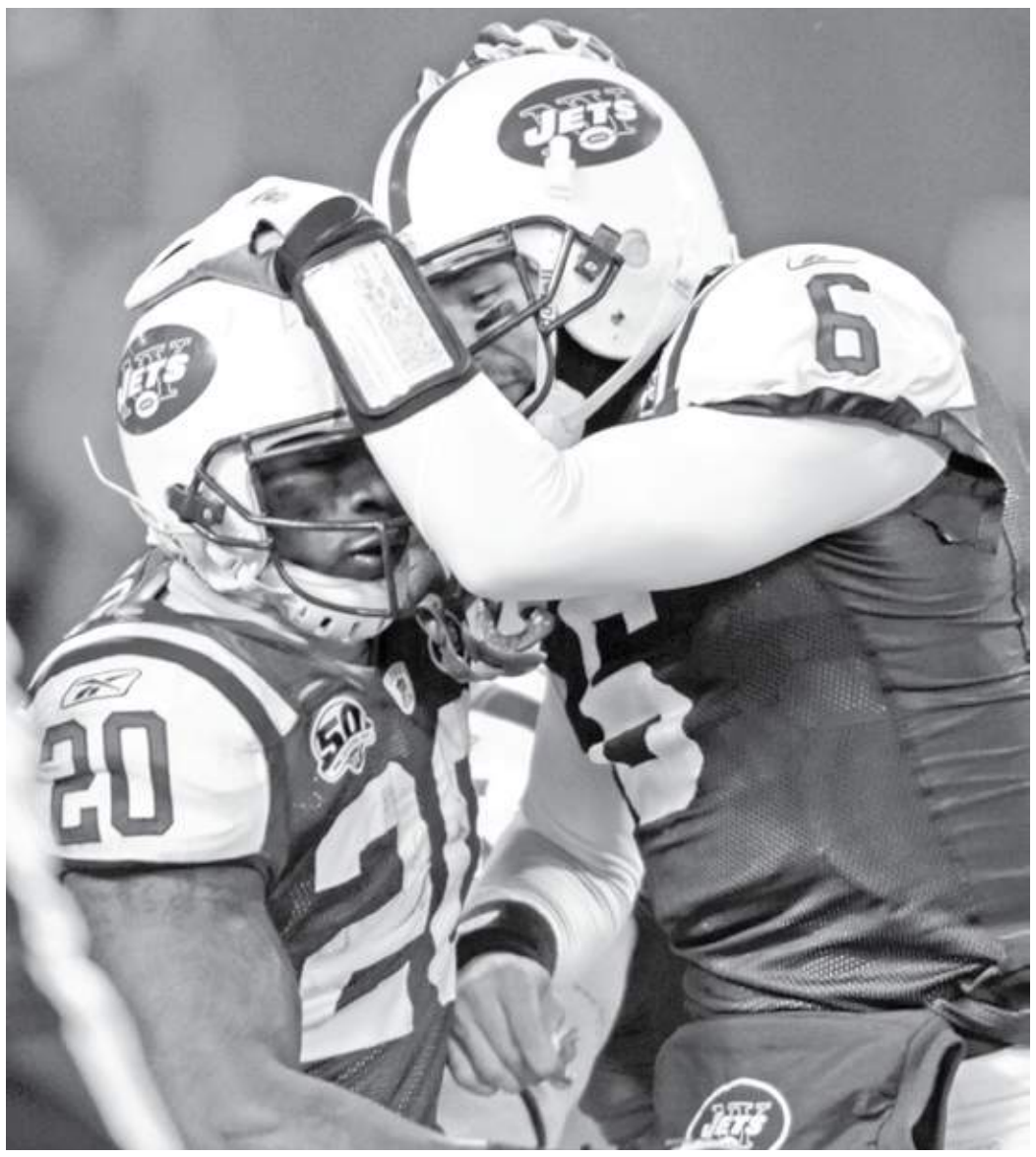
Chiefs 44, Broncos 24

At Denver, Jamaal Charles ran for a Chiefs-record 259 yards on 25 carries and linebacker Derrick Johnson returned two Kyle Orton interceptions for touchdowns in Kansas City's first victory in nine tries at Invesco Field.

Steelers 30, Dolphins 24

At Miami, a swarming Steelers defense sent two Miami quarterbacks to the sideline, including Pat White with a scary head injury, but the reigning Super Bowl champions were eliminated from the playoff chase.

The Dolphins (7-9), who won the AFC East in 2008, were also eliminated with 2 minutes left in the game when Houston beat New England. Pittsburgh (9-7) needed losses or ties by the Ravens, Broncos and Jets to reach the playoffs, but they were eliminated when Baltimore beat Oakland.



AP

New York Jets running back Thomas Jones, left, celebrates with quarterback Mark Sanchez after scoring a touchdown during the first quarter of an NFL football game against the Cincinnati Bengals at Giants Stadium in East Rutherford, N.J., Sunday, Jan. 3, 2010.

Vikings 44, Giants 7

At Minneapolis, Brett Favre passed for 316 yards and four touchdowns without a turnover in less than three quarters against the Giants.

The NFC North champion Vikings (12-4) cruised into the locker room to start watching the Philadelphia-Dallas game with an eye on their seed for the NFC playoffs. With the Eagles' loss, the Vikings earned the No. 2 seed in the NFC and a first-round bye.

Bills 30, Colts 7

At Orchard Park, New York, Despite near whiteout conditions in the first half, Ryan Fitzpatrick threw three touchdown passes for Buffalo (6-10), including a 41-yarder to Terrell Owens.

Fred Jackson had 212 yards rushing to reach 1,000 for the first time in his career.

Packers 33, Cardinals 7

At Glendale, Arizona, Aaron Rodgers, playing mostly against the Arizona reserves, shredded the Cardinals in three quarters, completing 21 of 26 passes for 235 yards and a touchdown.

Charles Woodson returned an interception 45 yards for another score as the Packers (11-5) won for the seventh time in eight games.

It was the most one-sided home loss for Arizona in coach Ken Whisenhunt's three seasons with the Cardinals.

Panthers 23, Saints 10

At Charlotte, North Carolina, Jonathan Stewart rushed for 125 yards and a touchdown, and the Panthers (8-8) won their third straight. Stewart surpassed Pro Bowl pick DeAngelo Williams for the team rushing lead as they became the first teammates since the AFL-NFL merger to each rush for over 1,100 yards.

Williams (1,117 yards) sat out his second straight game because of a sprained ankle, while Stewart (1,133 yards) left in the third quarter after aggravating his chronic left Achilles' tendon injury.

Chargers 23, Redskins 20

At San Diego, California, Billy Volek threw a 2-yard touchdown pass to fullback Mike Tolbert with 35 seconds left to rally the playoff-bound Chargers to their 11th straight victory.

Browns 23, Jaguars 17

At Cleveland, Jerome Harrison rushed for 127 yards and a touchdown, and Josh Cribbs ran for a TD, giving Cleveland its first four-game winning streak since 1994. That pushed coach Eric Mangini into an uncertain offseason with momentum to fight for his job.

Falcons 20, Buccaneers 10

At Tampa Florida, Matt Ryan threw for 223 yards and two touchdowns, helping the Falcons finish with consecutive winning records for the first time in franchise history.

Standing in for injured leading rusher Michael Turner, Jason Snelling ran for 147 yards on 25 carries for Atlanta (9-7).

49ers 28, Rams 6

At St. Louis, Vernon Davis equaled the NFL record for touchdown receptions for a tight end with his 13th of the season, helping the 49ers finish strong and the lowly Rams clinch the No. 1 overall draft pick.

Frank Gore added 107 yards rushing on 23 carries and two late TDs for the 49ers (8-8), who pulled away after a desultory first half in which they mustered only 52 yards and trailed 3-0.

Bears 37, Lions 23

At Detroit, Jay Cutler matched a career high for a second straight week with four touchdown passes.

The Bears (7-9) won their final two games and three of the first four. The problem: Chicago lost eight of 10 games between its strong start and finish.

Source: Redskins will fire Zorn on Monday

By JOSEPH WHITE
AP SPORTS WRITER

The Washington Redskins plan to fire coach Jim Zorn on Monday, an official within the NFL told The Associated Press.

The Redskins planned to make the move on the day after the end of a disappointing regular season. Washington struggled early despite a weak schedule and finished 4-12 after losing 23-20 in Sunday's finale against the San Diego Chargers.

The official spoke to the AP on Sunday on condition of anonymity because no formal announcement has been made.

"I would not even comment on that," Zorn said after Sunday's game. "There are a lot of things, I'm sure, out there as far as stories. There already has been. So I get that. I'm working on our team meeting, our offseason schedule, and until I'm told that I'm on any other effort, I'm getting ready."

Zorn's dismissal has been expected for months. The front office stripped him of his play-calling duties in late October, and owner Dan Snyder has interviewed assistant coach Jerry Gray for the job, according to the Fritz Pollard Alliance, which monitors minority hiring in the NFL.

Gray's interview was an effort to comply with the Rooney Rule, which requires that teams consider a minority candidate for the head coaching position. If the NFL deems that the Rooney Rule has been satisfied, the Redskins are free to act quickly to hire a replacement for Zorn. Former Denver Broncos coach Mike Shanahan is considered the favorite.

Zorn's replacement will be Washington's seventh coach since Snyder bought the team in 1999. Playing a substantial part in the decision will be Bruce Allen, who was hired as the general manager last month.

"I don't know what to expect. Nobody does," Gray said after Sunday's game. "Bruce is going to evaluate everybody."

Asked if he would like the job, Gray said: "Well, if it's open and they call me, of course I do."

Zorn started 6-2 as a rookie head coach last season, but the team struggled over the second half and finished 8-8. This year's team has been hurt by numerous injuries, a lack of depth and tons of off-the-field distractions, but also by an inability of Zorn's West Coast offense to consistently find the end zone.

The Redskins failed to score more than 17 points in their first eight games, prompting the front office to bring longtime NFL assistant coach Sherm Lewis out of retirement as an offensive consultant and play-caller.

Zorn wasn't even on Snyder's list of candidates when Joe Gibbs retired at the end of the 2007 season. Zorn become a last-minute option when other contenders either showed no interest, dropped out or were deemed unsatisfactory. Snyder initially hired Zorn to be the offensive coordinator, then promoted him to head coach two weeks later after an extensive interview.

Zorn, who had never previously been a coordinator in the NFL, at times seemed overwhelmed by the head coaching job, but his strong start and quirky stories made him an early sensation last season. The front office soured on him in 2009, and executive vice president of football operations Vinny Cerrato announced in October that Zorn would finish the season after a week of internal discussions on the matter. Cerrato has since resigned and was essentially replaced by Allen.

"I'm still reeling from this loss," Zorn said. "Anything that I say about my future here would just be babbling along. I'm going to be forthright and ask and get things moving, but I certainly want to be the head coach here."

NBA BRIEFS

Ron Artest cleared for full practice with Lakers

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Ron Artest could rejoin the Los Angeles Lakers early this week after missing five games following a fall at his home on Christmas night. Coach Phil Jackson said Sunday night that Artest has been cleared to practice without restrictions Monday. He went through a no-contact practice Saturday and participated in the team's shootaround before Sunday night's game against Dallas. If Artest practices without problems, Jackson said he could return Tuesday night at home against his former team Houston. "It's up to them," Artest said. "It's not comfortable, but you're never 100 percent. I got the staples out today. My head was swollen, so that's better." Artest fell at home on Dec. 25, causing a concussion, a deep cut on his left elbow and a slight loss of memory.

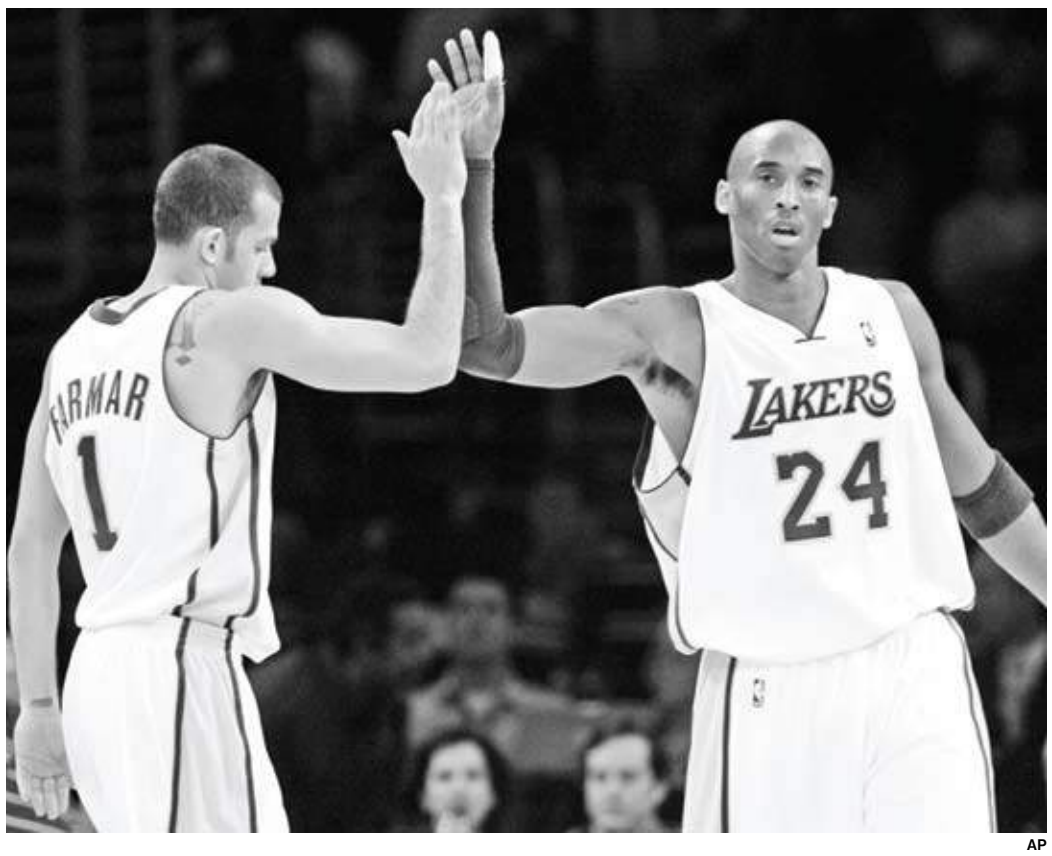
Gasol forced out with strained hamstring

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Forward Pau Gasol has left the Los Angeles Lakers' game against the Dallas Mavericks because of a strained left hamstring. A team spokesman said Sunday night that Gasol would undergo an ultrasound test on Monday. Gasol made all three of his field goal attempts for six points before leaving after seven minutes. He sat out the first 11 games this season with a strained right hamstring sustained in the preseason. He missed just one regular season game last season.

Nuggets' Andersen leaves game with sprained ankle

DENVER (AP)—Denver Nuggets forward Chris Andersen sprained his left ankle in the second quarter of Sunday's game against the Philadelphia 76ers. Andersen sprained the ankle in the backcourt with 7:33 left in the first half and left the game. He had an X-ray done on the ankle and the results were negative.

Farmar scores 24 as Lakers rout Mavericks



AP

Los Angeles Lakers' Jordan Farmar, left, is congratulated by Kobe Bryant during the second half against the Dallas Mavericks in an NBA basketball game in Los Angeles on Sunday, Jan. 3, 2010.

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Jordan Farmar led seven players in double figures with 24 points and the Los Angeles Lakers trounced the Western Conference's second-best team in a 131-96 victory over the Dallas Mavericks on Sunday night.

Andrew Bynum had 19 points on 8 of 8 shooting, five rebounds and four assists, Lamar Odom had 15 points and 15 rebounds, Kobe Bryant 15 points and eight assists, Sasha Vujacic and Shannon Brown 11 points each and Derek Fisher 10 for the defending NBA champions, who improved to a league-best 27-6.

For the first time in six games, the Lakers didn't go down to the wire to win or end up losing. Instead, they asserted their dominance in the West with their largest victory of the season. They shot a season-best 63 percent from the field.

It was the biggest victory in the series between the rivals, topping the Lakers' 33-point win on Dec. 1, 1993.

Dirk Nowitzki had 22 points and eight rebounds for the Mavs, who never led and shot poorly the entire game. Jason Kidd was scoreless in 27 minutes.

With Bryant distributing the ball, Odom took over rebounding and Bynum did a little of everything after Pau Gasol strained his left hamstring seven minutes into the first quarter. He didn't return after scoring six points and was expected to have an ultrasound Monday.

The Spanish forward sat out the first 11 games this season with a strained right hamstring.

The Lakers romped to a 40-point lead after three quarters, letting coach Phil Jackson go deep into his bench in the fourth. All 11 available Lakers scored. They outscored Dallas 52-36 in the paint while controlling the boards 44-40 and piling up 33 assists.

Nowitzki was the only Dallas player in double figures by halftime with 16, while the rest of the starting lineup combined for 11 points. Drew Gooden also was scoreless.

The Mavs shot a measly 16 percent in the first quarter, making just four baskets and missing all six of their 3-point attempts. They made eight field goals in the second and trailed 64-39 at halftime.

Wizards' Arenas not talking after practice

WASHINGTON (AP)—A day after acknowledging "bad judgment" for bringing guns to the locker room, embattled guard Gilbert Arenas was not talking after practice.

The Washington Wizards star is to meet with law enforcement Monday. Arenas is being investigated by federal and local authorities.

On Saturday, Arenas also denied that he gambles and said there are misconceptions about a dispute between him and teammate Javaris Crittenton.

Coach Flip Saunders spoke at practice Sunday and questioned the way in which Arenas is being portrayed. The coach said various reports are trying to "lump a lot of things together." He added that such an approach toward Arenas is "not fair to him from that standpoint."

Saunders disputed a report that said Arenas deliberately tried to disrupt practices during training camp in October and refused to speak with the coach.

"That's not true. ... He has not been in any kind of situation along those lines," Saunders said.

The New York Post has reported that Arenas and Crittenton drew guns on each other. When asked about that Saturday, Arenas said: "I can't speak on that. But if you know me, you've been here, I've never did anything (involving) violence. Anything I do is funny—well, it's funny to me."

Asked if the accounts have been blown out of proportion, Arenas laughed and said: "A little."

Arenas played in just 15 games the past two seasons after three operations on his left knee. Saunders said Arenas is making a difficult transition and has been cooperative. This year, Arenas has played in all 31 games for last-place Washington (10-21) and is averaging 22.7 points.

"He's never backed away from any challenge when I've jumped him for taking a bad shot," Saunders said. "He's never shied away from criticism. I think our communication has been good."

76ers 108, Nuggets 105

At Denver, Allen Iverson scored 17 points and Elton Brand added 16 as the Philadelphia 76ers held off a furious rally to beat the injury-riddled Denver Nuggets.

Nene had 24 points and 15 rebounds, and Ty Lawson scored 23 points for the Nuggets, who have lost six of eight.

The Nuggets played their second game in as many nights without their top two scorers. Carmelo Anthony (right knee contusion) and Chauncey Billups (left groin strain) sat out the game.

It was Iverson's second game in Denver since he was traded last year.

Bobcats 91, Cavaliers 88

At Cleveland, Ronald Murray hit a 3-pointer with 56 seconds left to put Charlotte up for good as the Bobcats beat Cleveland.

Stephen Jackson scored 22 points, Gerald Wallace added 19 and Raymond Felton had 17 for Charlotte, which won for the first time at Quicken Loans Arena after 10 straight losses.

LeBron James scored 29 points for the Cavs and Mo Williams added 27.

Raptors 91, Spurs 86

At Toronto, Chris Bosh scored 22 points to become the leading scorer in Raptors history and help Toronto win its sixth in seven games.

Bosh, who also had 15 rebounds, made a jumper from the top of the key with 1:39 left in the third quarter to eclipse Vince Carter's mark of 9,420 points. Bosh now has 9,428 points.

Tony Parker scored 23 points and Tim Duncan had 21 points and 12 rebounds for the Spurs, whose win streak was snapped at five games.

Knicks 132, Pacers 89

At New York, Wilson Chandler scored 23 points, and David Lee added 22 points and 16 rebounds, as New York flirted with the biggest victory in franchise history.

Danilo Gallinari finished with 20 points and eight rebounds for the Knicks, who led by 48 points—the largest lead in the NBA this season—and won for the 10th time in 15 games.

The Knicks' largest victory is by 48 points, done three times.

Luther Head scored 18 points for the Pacers.

Report: Woods had 'fat lip' 4 days after accident

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP)—Tiger Woods had a "fat lip" but no other visible facial injuries when he met with Florida state troopers four days after the accident outside his home, according to a television report.

Florida Highway Patrol spokeswoman Kim Montes told WESH-TV in Orlando on Wednesday that Woods and his attorney met with troopers on Dec. 1.

Montes and other FHP officials did not immediately return several phone messages and e-mails from The Associated Press.

The meeting at an undisclosed location in Orlando came after troopers tried for three days to meet with Woods about the accident in which his sport utility vehicle crashed into a fire hydrant and tree outside his home.

The officers arranged the meeting to deliver a $164 citation for careless driving and to see if Woods had any injuries that were inconsistent with a car accident, Montes told the TV station.

Woods had a "fat lip," but no other visible injuries and officers had no reason to believe the golfer was a victim of domestic violence, Montes told WESH-TV.

In this Nov. 15, 2009, file photo, Tiger Woods from the United States, hits an approach shot during the Australian Masters golf tournament at Kingston Heath Golf Club in Melbourne, Australia.

AP

Woods has not been seen in public since the accident. He announced on Dec. 10 that he was taking an indefinite leave of absence from the PGA Tour to focus on repairing his marriage after admitting his infidelity.

Monty says Woods will no longer be the same threat

LONDON (AP)—Colin Montgomerie believes Tiger Woods will return from his marital problems to win more majors but says he won't be the iconic player who dominated golf for the past decade.

Woods has taken an indefinite leave from the game after admitting to infidelity.

Europe's Ryder Cup captain told BBC Radio on Sunday that he had no doubt Woods would come back and add to his 14 majors, but said his mystique had now gone.

DIAMOND

From Page 28

town, as for the first time this season, it failed to drill a single triple in a game. Bernardo was the lone bright spot on Noni's offense with his 31 points. Glenn Aquino was Noni's second best scorer with nine, but was scoreless in the fourth quarter.

Offense was no problem for Diamond, which drew 21 and 19 markers from Junar Guiab and Elmer Esdrelon. John Artates chipped in 13, while Badong Camacho and Brendon Talania combined for 18 markers.

Esdrelon's triple and another trey from J.R. Barrios foiled Noni's repeated comeback bids in the fourth quarter, while Guiab's short jumper and timing at the paint for putbacks widened the gap in the last four minutes of the match.

Cool Water 76, Wushin 62

In the masters division, Cool Water kept its playoffs bid alive after beating Wushin, 76-62.

The win improved Cool Water's record to 2-5, only half a game behind Wushin and GEC Pawnshop, which are tied for third to fourth place with their identical 2-4 records.

Only the Top 4 teams will advance to the double-elimination playoffs and Cool Water is currently in fifth place. Pennant champion Ebisuya (6-1) and University of Loyola (5-2) are assured of tickets to the next round.

Cool Water held Wushin to nine points in the first period to take an early double-digit lead, 19-9, and the former never looked back to boost its chances for the playoffs.

Bernard Montano top-scored for Cool Water with 21 points, while Gilbert Espinosa chipped in 17.

First Game

Cool Water 76 – Montano 21, Espinosa 17, Martin 10, Pablo 9, Galulu 7, Garcia 6, Patricio 2, Darag 2, Mateo 2.

Wushin 62 – Dayrit 22, S. Ebuen 11, O. Ebuen 10, De Jesus 6, Leong 6, Trajano 5, Samson 2.

Scoring by quarters: 19-9, 36-29, 56-42, 76-62.

Second Game

Diamond Ali'i 88 – Guiab 21, Esdrelon 19, Artates 13, Talania 9, Camacho 9, M. Capalad 6, Barrios 5, W. Capalad 4, Mercurio 2.

Noni Saipan 72 – Bernardo 32, Aquino 9, Demapan 8, Tamayo 6, De Vero 6, Pantaleon 4, Lerio 4, Abuel 3.

Scoring by quarters: 18-20, 41-35, 60-61, 88-72.

ROQUE

From Page 28

will be people who will step up to the plate and continue what Roque had started. There are only a few people who know how to do statistics in baseball and softball and Roque was one of them," the SLLB president added.

Roque's wife, Remedio Lisua Celis, said his husband had passion for baseball and softball and was involved in the sport, as a manager, coach, and volunteer for more than 10 years.

"He loves going to the field and making notes in the score sheets. That's what kept him busy on weekends and even on weekdays at night," the widow said.

Former *Saipan Tribune* reporter Jonathan Perez remember how Roque answered phone calls and relayed to him the statistics for each game in the Majors, Junior, Senior, and Big League and sometimes made play-by-play accounts in the turning point of a match.

"If I failed to check on the score sheets after the game and I can't go to his house in Koblerville, he made life convenient to me, answering those phone calls and telling me what happened in the matches," Perez said.

Former SLLB president Mike Borja also had several good memories with Roque.

"One was in 2003 during the Asia Pacific Regional Tournament on Rota. We were there for 21 days and I did not hear him complain for a lot of work he had done in those days. He was always smiling, willing to answer questions from players, managers, and coaches," Borja said.

"He was a very charismatic person so one would never hesitate to come to him. Another good thing about him was he remembered players. If a player approaches Roque and asks for his batting average, Naki knows who that player is and will give him what he wants. We lost a really great man," the former SLLB head added.

Liz Palacios, who handles Chamolinian Softball's statistics, said Roque's volunteer work for softball and baseball rubbed off on his family and she wishes the Celis family will continue to support and play in tournaments despite the patriarch's death.

Meanwhile, the Celis family thanked those who helped and are helping them in this trying time. Mid last month, members of the baseball/softball community held two fundraising events for Roque.

Roque's remains will be escorted from CHC morgue to his residence in Koblerville today for viewing, which run from 8am to 1:30pm. It will be followed by a mass at St. Jude Church at 3pm.

CAMACHO

From Page 28

out, but failed to prevent Camacho from blasting a double that ended the game in San Roque's favor.

San Roque improved to a 3-1 record, keeping its slot in the upper half of the team standings in the 21-squad field. Team Familia is at the bottom half with its 1-3 slate.

Starting pitcher Tony Luzama was the top performer at bat for San Roque, going 3-for-4 and scoring two runs. He had a two-run homer in the second inning and finished with four RBIs.

Man Amigos 27, 6-Pack 17

In the battle of teams in the top half of the team standings, Man Amigos prevailed over 6-Pack, 27-17.

The win was Man Amigos fourth in five games putting the team in solo third place. 6-Pack absorbed its second defeat in five matches, tying Freedom Flyers for seventh to eighth place in the team standings.

Shortstop Peter Sablan led Man Amigos with his 4-for-4 performance at bat. He tallied fur runs, two homers, and six RBIs. Outfielder John Terlaje and first baseman Manny Sablan added four RBIs apiece on identical 3-for-4 clip at the plate. Catcher Jeff Cabrera and leftfielder James Fleming logged two RBIs each.

The game was still close after three complete innings with Man Amigos ahead by only one, 17-16. However, Man Amigos tightened up their defense in the last two innings, giving up only one run while scoring 10 more. Derrick Tudela scored 6-Pack's lone run off a Man Amigos' error in the fifth inning.

G-Ballers 15, Go For Broke 5

G-Ballers finally broke into the win column after beating Go for Broke, 15-5.

G-Ballers dropped their first four games before finding their rhythm on Saturday, allowing Go For Broke only one run in the last four innings.

Back-to-back homers from Jude Dickenson and Gary Pangelinan gave G-Ballers a 9-4 lead after one complete inning. G-Ballers kept the lead and gained their first win when they shut out Go For Broke in the second, third, and fifth inning. George Cruz made Go For Broke's lone run in the last four innings, reaching home plate on Jonathan Pangelinan's sacrifice fly in the fourth inning.

Freedom Flyers 7, Red Eye 5

In a low scoring game, Freedom Flyers survived a Red Eye rally to eke out a 7-5 victory.

Freedom Flyers shut out Red Eye in the first four innings, before the latter made a comeback in the last three and fell short.

Shane Yamada paced Freedom Flyers with his five RBIs on a 3-for-4 performance at bat. He made two homers and also scored two runs. Mel Manahane was only 1-for-3 at the plate, but posted the third homer of the game with his solo round-tripper in the third inning.

AULERIO

From Page 28

and-under division, joining the Sonics' Tristan Ecalnea, Kagman Boys Brok's Juan Maratita, G-Stars' Marvin Rabauliman, and Rollers B's Lawrence Deleon Guerrero. Maratita was named scoring champ in his division.

In the girls' 18-and-under age group, making it to the elite group were Mixed Plate's Nicole Lebria and Roxanne Duenas and MHS Lady Dolphins' Lena Guzman, Lalaine Pagarao, and Glorily Williams. Duenas also emerged as top scorer in the group, while Lebria took the MVP trophy.

The MVP plum in the girls' 14-and-under age group went to Hopwood 1's Geraldine Castillo, who won her third award of the night after also grabbing the scoring champ citation. She was part of the "Fantastic Five," joining teammates Kimberly Ocampo and Alma Hemley and Lady Hilitai's Janet Jones and Jude Rose Ngirbabul.

Rollers A's Stacy Macaranas went home with two awards in the boys' 14-and-under division, notching the MVP trophy and making it to the "Fantastic Five." Jack Aranda, who was named scoring champion, was also part of the selected group. Completing the list were the G-Stars' Thomas Kautz, Hopwood's Kenta Castro, and Rollers B's Prince Futor.

Michael Cenir of RBC Badu claimed the MVP and scoring champion honors in the boys' 11-and-under division. Joining Cenir in the "Fantastic Five," were J.C. Cadua, Alcor Admana, Alexander Limes, and Roi Venezuela.

TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES

NBA STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	24	8	.750	–
Toronto	17	18	.486	8 1/2
New York	14	20	.412	11
Philadelphia	10	23	.303	14 1/2
New Jersey	3	30	.091	21 1/2

Southeast Division

Orlando	24	9	.727	–
Atlanta	21	11	.656	2 1/2
Miami	16	15	.516	7
Charlotte	14	18	.438	9 1/2
Washington	10	21	.323	13

Central Division

Cleveland	27	9	.750	–
Chicago	14	17	.452	10 1/2
Milwaukee	13	18	.419	11 1/2
Detroit	11	21	.344	14
Indiana	10	23	.303	15 1/2

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Southwest Division

Dallas	23	11	.676	–
San Antonio	20	12	.625	2
Houston	20	14	.588	3
Memphis	16	16	.500	6
New Orleans	15	16	.484	6 1/2

Northwest Division

Portland	22	13	.629	–
Denver	21	13	.618	1/2
Oklahoma City	18	15	.545	3
Utah	18	15	.545	3
Minnesota	7	28	.200	15

Pacific Division

L.A. Lakers	27	6	.818	–
Phoenix	21	13	.618	6 1/2
L.A. Clippers	14	18	.438	12 1/2
Sacramento	14	19	.424	13
Golden State	9	23	.281	17 1/2

Yesterday's Games

New York 132, Indiana 89
Charlotte 91, Cleveland 88
Toronto 91, San Antonio 86
Philadelphia 108, Denver 105
L.A. Lakers 131, Dallas 96

NBA LEADERS

SCORING

	G	FG	FT	PTS	AVG
Bryant, LAL	32	362	218	980	30.6
Anthony, DEN	32	331	272	961	30.0
James, CLE	35	350	252	1010	28.9
Durant, OKC	33	321	256	942	28.5
Wade, MIA	31	281	227	817	26.4
Ellis, GOL	32	326	152	821	25.7
Nowitzki, DAL	32	288	201	801	25.0
Bosh, TOR	34	280	243	809	23.8
Roy, POR	34	282	181	793	23.3
Arenas, WAS	31	247	147	703	22.7
Johnson, ATL	32	272	102	699	21.8
Gay, MEM	30	236	129	624	20.8
Stoudemire, PHX	34	268	168	704	20.7
Kaman, LAC	32	273	105	651	20.3
Randolph, MEM	32	262	118	645	20.2
Evans, SAC	29	218	132	583	20.1
Duncan, SAN	29	232	116	580	20.0
Williams, UTA	31	222	127	608	19.6
Boozer, UTA	33	255	127	637	19.3
Jennings, MIL	31	219	99	598	19.3

FG PERCENTAGE

	FG	FGA	PCT
Perkins, BOS	153	238	.643
Gasol, MEM	184	297	.620
Howard, ORL	182	297	.613
Horford, ATL	188	317	.593
Hilario, DEN	174	300	.580
Lee, NYK	255	445	.573
Stoudemire, PHX	268	469	.571
Landry, HOU	198	349	.567
Millsap, UTA	140	249	.562
Duncan, SAN	232	415	.559

REBOUNDS

	G	OFF	DEF	TOT	AVG
Howard, ORL	33	121	317	438	13.3
Noah, CHI	31	123	256	379	12.2
Wallace, CHA	30	67	291	358	11.9
Camby, LAC	31	88	266	354	11.4
Randolph, MEM	32	150	215	365	11.4
Bosh, TOR	34	111	270	381	11.2
Lee, NYK	33	79	279	358	10.8
Boozer, UTA	33	67	280	347	10.5
Haywood, WAS	31	127	192	319	10.3
Duncan, SAN	29	84	210	294	10.1

ASSISTS

	G	AST	AVG
Nash, PHX	34	381	11.2
Paul, NOR	23	242	10.5
Williams, UTA	31	301	9.7
Rondo, BOS	31	298	9.6
Kidd, DAL	33	296	9.0
B. Davis, LAC	32	250	7.8
James, CLE	35	273	7.8
Westbrook, OKC	33	241	7.3
Arenas, WAS	31	215	6.9
Duhon, NYK	33	213	6.5

NFL STANDINGS (FINAL)

AMERICAN CONFERENCE

East

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
x-New England	10	6	0	.625	427	285
y-N.Y. Jets	9	7	0	.563	348	236
Miami	7	9	0	.438	360	390
Buffalo	6	10	0	.375	258	326

South

x-Indianapolis	14	2	0	.875	416	307
Houston	9	7	0	.563	388	333
Tennessee	8	8	0	.500	354	402
Jacksonville	7	9	0	.438	290	380

North

x-Cincinnati	10	6	0	.625	305	291
y-Baltimore	9	7	0	.563	391	261
Pittsburgh	9	7	0	.563	368	324
Cleveland	5	11	0	.313	245	375

West

x-San Diego	13	3	0	.813	454	320
Denver	8	8	0	.500	326	324
Oakland	5	11	0	.313	197	379
Kansas City	4	12	0	.250	294	424

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

East

x-Dallas	11	5	0	.688	361	250
y-Philadelphia	11	5	0	.688	429	337
N.Y. Giants	8	8	0	.500	402	427
Washington	4	12	0	.250	266	336

South

x-New Orleans	13	3	0	.813	510	341
Atlanta	9	7	0	.563	363	325
Carolina	8	8	0	.500	315	308
Tampa Bay	3	13	0	.188	244	400

North

x-Minnesota	12	4	0	.750	470	312
y-Green Bay	11	5	0	.688	461	297
Chicago	7	9	0	.438	327	375
Detroit	2	14	0	.125	262	494

West

x-Arizona	10	6	0	.625	375	325
San Francisco	8	8	0	.500	330	281
Seattle	5	11	0	.313	280	390
St. Louis	1	15	0	.063	175	436

x-clinched division
y-clinched playoff spot

Yesterday's Games

Chicago 37, Detroit 23
Pittsburgh 30, Miami 24
Houston 34, New England 27
Buffalo 30, Indianapolis 7
San Francisco 28, St. Louis 6
Atlanta 20, Tampa Bay 10
Carolina 23, New Orleans 10
Cleveland 23, Jacksonville 17
Minnesota 44, N.Y. Giants 7
Tennessee 17, Seattle 13
Dallas 24, Philadelphia 0
San Diego 23, Washington 20
Kansas City 44, Denver 24
Baltimore 21, Oakland 13
Green Bay 33, Arizona 7
N.Y. Jets 37, Cincinnati 0

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOCAL SCORES

PILCOWA STANDINGS

Open

Diamond	6	1
Noni Saipan	4	3
Saipan Fresh	3	3
IT&E	3	3
NCIC	0	6

Masters

Ebisuya	6	1
University of Loyola	5	2
Wushin	2	4
GEC	2	4
Cool Water	2	5

BUDWEISER SOFTBALL STANDINGS

Island Rebels	5	0
Natibu	4	0
SaiPal	4	0
Man Amigos	4	1
San Roque	3	1
Chura	3	1
Freedom Air Flyers	3	2
6-Pack	3	2
Red Eye	2	2
Blazers	2	1
Ur Balls	2	2
Hitz	2	2
Berdax	1	2
Calikano-Falcons	1	3
Team Familia	1	3
Lancheros	1	3
Go For Broke	1	4
G-Ballers	1	4
Team Fuegu	1	4
Ramblers	1	4
X-Terminators	0	4

2009 Annual Youth Christmas Hoop Fest

PHOTOS By ROSELYN B. MONROYO

The Sixers' Ian Benavente grabs the rebound during their game against Kagman.

Rollers C's Richard Wang is all alone for an easy layup during their game against LMA Oldies.

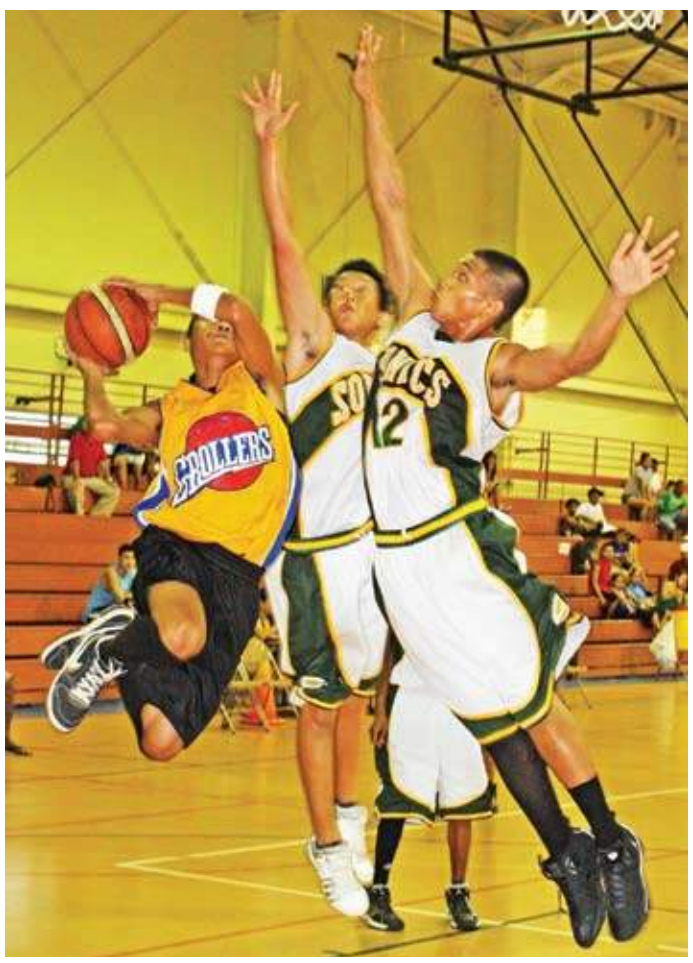
The Sixers' Matt Duenas makes a reverse layup against Kagman.

Rollers A's Zack Tudela pulls up for a fallaway jumper against Sonics defenders during the boys' 18-and-under finals.

The Lady Dolphins' Jacque Wonenberg towers above the rest in this rebound play.

Lil' Sonics Shawn Escalada goes for a layup against MHS Lady Dolphins' Lalaine Pagarao during their game in the 2009 Annual Youth Christmas Hoop Fest last week at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

The Sonics's Leo Galarse pulls up for a jumper against Rollers A's Brandon Aulerio.



Rollers A's Brandon Aulerio challenges two Sonics defenders.

Three MHS defenders gang up on Mixed Plate's Nicole Lebria during the girls' 18-and-under finals game.

Rollers A and Sonics players battle for the loose ball.

Farmar scores 24 as Lakers rout Mavericks

Jordan Farmar led seven players in double figures with 24 points and the Los Angeles Lakers trounced the Western Conference's second-best team in a 131-96 victory over the Dallas Mavericks on Sunday night. 25

Saipan Tribune
Sports

Jets earn playoff spot with 37-0 rout of Bengals

Rex Ryan's top-ranked defense shut down the Cincinnati Bengals as the New York Jets clinched their first playoff berth in three seasons with a 37-0 victory at a frigid Meadowlands on Sunday. 24

Diamond Ali'i secures pennant

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Diamond Ali'i clinched the pennant in the open division of the 2009 PILCOWA Basketball League, following its 88-72 win over Noni Saipan at the resumption of the competition on Sunday at the JP Centre Basketball Court.

The win gave Diamond a 6-1 record in the five-team competition. Even if Diamond drops its last game in the regular season against IT&E, the former is still assured of the pennant, as the four other squads had already lost at least three games. Diamond's lone loss in the league was against IT&E, 60-97.

Noni Saipan had the best chance to challenge Diamond for the pennant as the former entered the weekend game with a 4-2 record. However, after grabbing the lead at the end of the third quarter, 61-60, on Ivan De Vero's buzzer-beating layup, Noni Saipan ran out of gas in the fourth period.

Noni Saipan made only four field goals in the final canto and was scoreless in the first 3:48 minutes of the payoff quarter, allowing Diamond to regain the lead, 68-61. Only Kae Bernardo managed to score more than a field goal for Noni Saipan in the fourth quarter. Bart Demapan and Sonny Lerio scored the two other field goals and they came when the game was already decided.

Gunners Bon Tamayo and Wowie Abuel were held to six and three points, respectively with the former scoreless in the fourth and surprisingly missing free shots from the stripe. Abuel had only a free throw in the final quarter.

Noni Saipan was also off from down-

See DIAMOND on Page 26

Diamond Ali'i's John Artates eludes the defense of Noni Saipan's Jun Pantaleon on the way to an easy layup during their game in the PILCOWA caging on Sunday at the JP Centre Basketball Court.
ROSELYN B. MONROYO

MARK RABAGO
Roque Celis, left, poses with CNMI baseball great Francisco "Tan Ko" Palacios, CNMI District Administrator James Ada, and former SLLB presidents Mike Borja and Joe Salas during Saipan's hosting of the 2008 Asia Pacific Regional Tournament.

Roque Celis, 57

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Saipan Little League Baseball will open the 2010 season without its longtime statistician Roque "Naki" Abuel Sablan Celis, who passed away on Dec. 28 due to a lingering illness.

SLLB president Tony Rogolifoi said the baseball and softball community will definitely miss Celis, who was in charge of keeping and tabulating the Little League's statistics for more than six years.

"He was an asset to the Little League program. He was instrumental in making sure best players of the league are recognized after each season, as he volunteers his time doing the scores during games and recording statistics of these players," said Rogolifoi.

"Now that he is gone, I hope there

See ROQUE on Page 26

Aulerio leads top performers in Holiday Hoops

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Rollers A's Brandon Aulerio had a breakout game in their title match against the Sonics, earning him MVP honors in the boys' 18-and-under division of the 2009 Annual Youth Christmas Hoop Fest.

Aulerio scored 13 points in Rollers A's 58-52 win over the Sonics with his clutch treys in the second half foiling their foes' comeback bids.

Aulerio and other top performers in the boys and girls' 11-and-under, 14-and-under, and 18-and-under age group competitions in the five-day caging received either trophies or medals during a brief award ceremony at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium on Saturday.

The Rollers A's gunner also made it to the "Fantastic Five" of the boys' 18-

See AULERIO on Page 26

Rollers A's Brandon Aulerio poses with his MVP trophy during the awards ceremony for the 2009 Annual Youth Christmas Hoop Fest on Saturday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.
ROSELYN B. MONROYO

Camacho double lifts San Roque past Team Familia

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

San Roque foiled Team Familia's upset bid, pulling off a 19-18 victory during a make-up game in Chamolinian Softball Association's 2009 Budweiser Slow-pitch Softball League on Saturday at the Capital Hill Ballfield.

Dave Camacho Jr. made the game-winning hit with his double at the bottom of the seventh inning driving Wally Emul home. Emul earlier doubled, sending Derrick Sablan home and tying the game at 18-all. Team Familia pitcher Chris Apeluyo then struck out Sid Sablan for the first

See CAMACHO on Page 26

John Terlaje, seen catching a ball for Man Amigos in their previous game, made four RBIs in their 27-17 win over 6-Pack in the Chamolinian league on Saturday at the Capital Hill Ballfield.
ROSELYN B. MONROYO